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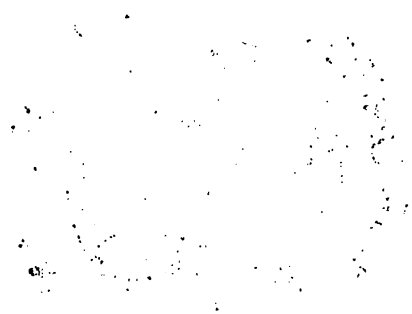
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HEROINES OF CLARITY:

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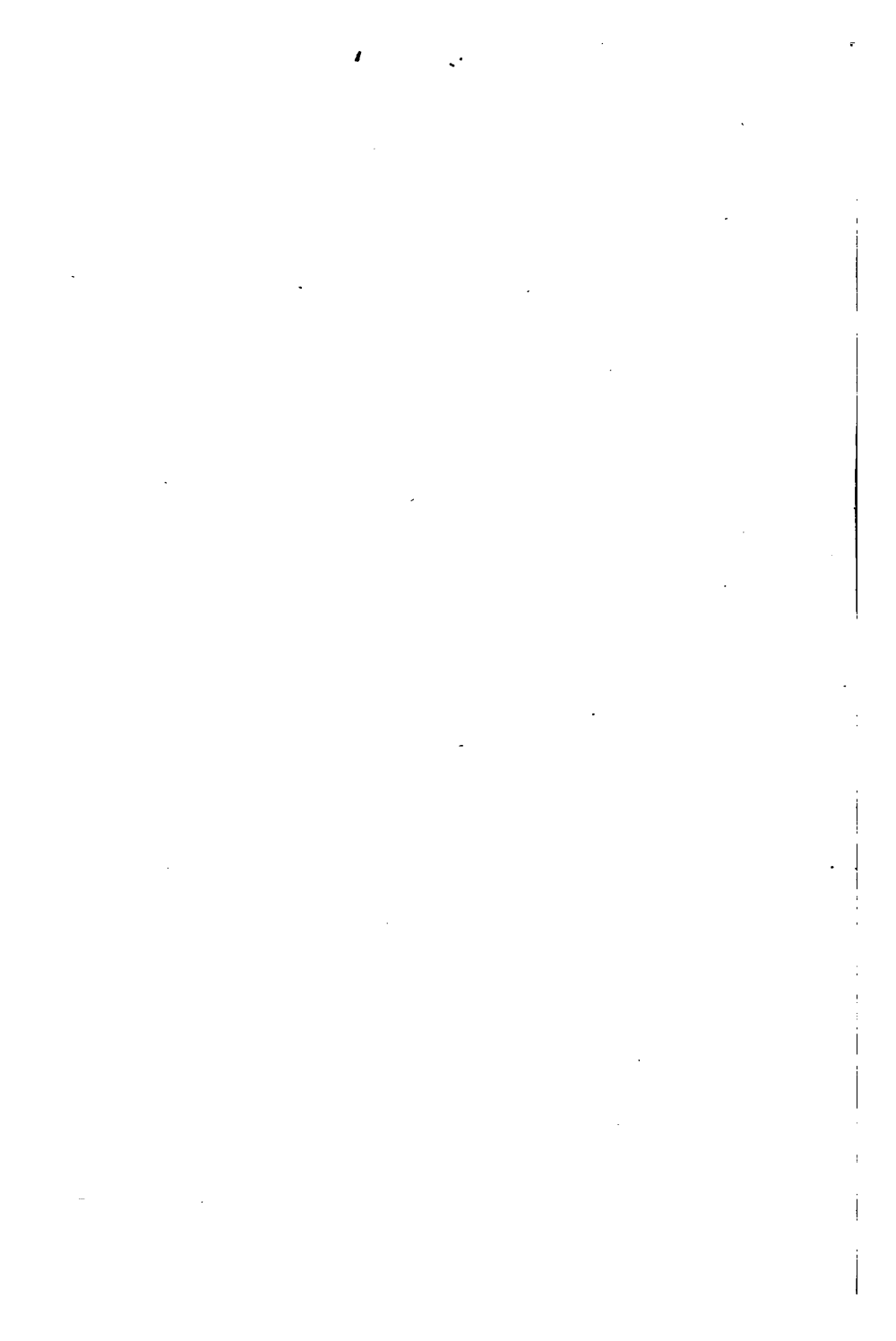
THE SISTERS OF VINCENT, JOHNNIE BROWN,
MILLE LE GRAS, MADAME DE MINAMON,
MRS. SETON, THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE FIRM,
ETC., ETC.

With a Preface

BY AUBREY L. P. TAYLOR, M.A.

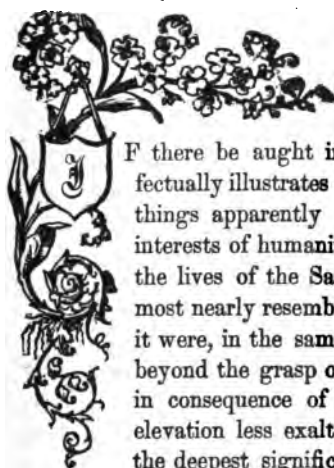


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Preface.



IF there be aught in this world which effectually illustrates the connection between things apparently small and the largest interests of humanity, it is to be found in the lives of the Saints, and of those who most nearly resembled them,—servants, as it were, in the same family, and often less beyond the grasp of ordinary appreciation in consequence of having attained to an elevation less exalted ;—and in their lives the deepest significance will frequently be found not in those more prominent actions, which have externally most in common with actions great according to a worldly estimate, but in matters apparently of mere detail, casual incidents, and sayings recorded we hardly know why. As a man's deportment upon great occasions reveals less of his habitual character, and has less of physiognomic expression, than his ordinary bearing ; so it is often from the most ordinary actions of holy persons that we can learn

most concerning the operations of that divine and inner life, of which their outward life is a manifestation. Nor are such questions interesting only in a religious point of view, or as a subject for the meditations of psychologists. They have the most important bearings on social relations. Nothing is more certain than that so long as nations continue to be formed of individuals, and the body politic to find its type in the personal being of man, so long will our political and social insight be in proportion to our insight into what is deepest and noblest in human nature. All political science is empirical which does not look for the philosophy of society in the nature of man; and our speculations on the latter subject can never rise above materialism until we contemplate the nature of man as irradiated by the light cast down upon it from that spiritual part of his being in which he converses with God. Man was made after the divine Image: no scheme of human society can therefore be sound, unless over every portion of it the light of that Image be diffused. The aspirations and efforts of holy souls are scattered beams of that primal glory, reflected from the face of human society; and if we shut our eyes to them, we simply exclude that highest form of teaching which proceeds at once from a Divine Teacher and from human experience. Far from a philosophy unenlightened by a Christian estimate of man's condition being capable of discovering a remedy for the evils that depress our mortal lot, it is incapable of ascertaining what those evils are, and discriminating between blessings and curses. The consequence is, that false ideals respecting the nature and end of man have again and again prompted genius to waste itself upon schemes of human

improvement, which, if the world were Pagan, could only be reproached with being chimerical, but which, in a Christian order of things, are absolutely self-contradictory. A few words will suffice to illustrate this.

Subjection to rule is the common lot of man. Is that circumstance an evil or not? The answer to this question must be derived from just views not only with respect to man's destiny in this world, but to the mode in which God trains His creatures for another world in which freedom is united with absolute obedience. Poverty is often an evil: are we then to conclude, or not, that economical views are sound in proportion as they favour the largest possible acquisition of national prosperity? The answer again resolves itself into moral, and ultimately into religious views, respecting the relation in which the outward well-being of man stands to his inner well-being. Is ignorance an evil? Why is it an evil? and is the remedy to be found in such an education as most largely develops man's intellectual powers, or in that which most effectually disciplines his spiritual being? The answer depends on the estimate we form of the relations between truth and knowledge, the human will and the human mind. Bodily afflictions—Should we seek a state of things in which these are, by any innocent means, simply reduced to a minimum; or a state of things in which the endurance of them, and the mitigation of them, are made most conducive to the glory of God? Again, the standard of right and wrong—what should that be? All virtues are, of course, to be exalted, and all vices to be condemned; but how are we to proportion our respect and our condemnation? Many of the natural virtues, such

as courage, industry, moderation, &c., contribute very strikingly to the outward greatness of communities, even when alloyed by several vices, such as pride and covetousness. On the other hand, a great deal of faith, hope, charity, humility, and patience, especially when mixed up with defects such as even saints have not been exempt from, often fail to produce any very splendid external result. What class of virtues ought we then chiefly to venerate?—These are but a very few of the social questions upon which it is evident that the greatest light must be thrown by such views of human life as are illustrated by the records of those who have lived for God, and whose life has commonly been hidden from the world.

Passing by, then, those higher considerations respecting the interior life, as to which the following biographies are far more eloquent than any comment on them could be, it may be worth while to indicate the degree in which they stand related to the questions of the day. More clearly than half the abstruse books with which the inquiring mind concerns itself, they illustrate the social problem of the age, especially as forced on the attention of the two greatest nations of the modern world, England and France. Each of these countries may be said to have taken its fortunes into its own hands in a greater degree than any other of the old countries of Europe. Both have abounded in teachers whose constant advice has been to work out new destinies, worthy of an advanced period of civilisation; but who, while they agreed in destroying the institutions of Catholic Christendom, have often agreed in little

else. The experiment, so far as it has been carried out, has not proved in all respects successful; and though nothing could be more unphilosophical than to imagine that the middle ages, or any other periods of the world, are to be lived over again, it assuredly is not unwise to ask ourselves what lessons are to be learned from past times, and how far the institutions which they built up for the relief of man's estate are applicable to present times, and to those that await us. The latter end of the last century ushered in the most momentous event since the Reformation, and the one most analogous to it in the political order, viz. the French Revolution. Incomplete as is the restoration of religion in France, the degree in which it has taken place is the fact of chief importance amid the mutations to which France has been subjected in the present century. To what is it that society owes this partial restoration, and the return of civil order, so closely connected with it? Has England no difficulties, political or social, for which a remedy can be found in manners or institutes such as were her glory in the time of the Heptarchy, of the Conquest, of the Crusades, of Magna Charta—such as her Edwards, her Henrys, and her Alfred revered? These are questions on which the humble persons recorded in the following volume, whether founders of convents or fellow-labourers in the same wide field of religious charity, perhaps never meditated, but for the solution of which their biographies furnish no small materials. They teach us how it is that even among those who have lost the divine gift of faith, religion still retains in part her healing power.

In the midst of the stupid insults and injuries with

which the Church is constantly assailed, her beneficent mission remains ever attested by one note at least to which men of good-will cannot remain permanently insensible. Like her Divine Lord, she "goes about doing good." She has her higher as well as her lower office; and while she preaches a kingdom which is not of this world, she also does what this world vainly attempts to do, in the way of alleviating the calamities that afflict our temporal state. Banished from the thrones of outward dominion, she is still to be found in the prisons and the hospitals. Her consolation, when no longer allowed to guide the soul, is to heal the sick body of those who, in their delirium, cannot abstain from striking at her who would soothe their pains. As children come back in sickness to be tended by a mother, whom, in the intoxication of health and strength, they had neglected or injured; so nations, after the storm of revolution has swept by, return to have their wounds dressed by her in maligning whom they once delighted. Of this fact revolutionary France has been a conspicuous example. Amid the wreck of her old institutions, the noblest of her triumphs was, as she deemed in the hour of madness, her victory over the Church. But it was in vain that she struggled to escape from the charmed circle of Grace and Providence. Afflictions, sent in mercy, have brought her back to the religious institutions originally accorded in mercy. It has been well said, that the Sisters of Charity have been the chief instruments in winning back France to Christianity. An army of women conquered an army of revolutionists; and the vocations of helpless children proved stronger than the decrees of constituent assem-

olies. It was possible to dethrone religion; but the painted courtesan who was borne along in a triumphal car as the Goddess of Reason, proved unable to act as a substitute. It was possible to deny the mysteries of the Faith, but impossible to repel sorrow, disease, and care by windy phrases. The sighs of prisoners in dungeons, and the groans of sufferers in hospitals, were the refutation (where none would listen to argument) of declamations announcing the millennium of self-will, and the new gospel of empirical science. It has been with the mind of France as with the body. The disease of ignorance needed a cure as well as other diseases; and the mere secular treatment of that disease turned out, on experience, to be but quackery. Polytechnic schools without religion might do many ingenious and surprising things; but they could not lay a foundation for social order, prevent the necessity of a new revolution every dozen years, or provide an enlightened nation with as much discretion as is needed to hinder it from cutting its own throat. Education, as well as the relief of temporal distresses, has accordingly in France been obliged to renounce its pompous but barren pretensions; and to take an humbler place—but one which enables it to do its work—among the corporal “works of mercy.” The religious institutions or associations, devoted to man’s outward condition, to be found in Paris alone, amount to between seventy and eighty, different in *kind*; and to a far larger number if we reckon the various institutions classed in several cases under the same general name. The perusal of the list would astonish those who know of Paris little more than is to be picked up in cafés and theatres.

Notre Dame, with all that it represents, is as much a *fact* as the Palais Royal, with that world of which it is the centre. In that great city, which the powers of good and evil have so often chosen as the chief arena of their conflict, there exist the extremes of virtue and vice,—each developed to the uttermost, as might have been expected, by the pressure of its opposite. The superficial or prejudiced traveller sees in Paris nothing but the Paradise of the senses and the temple of vanity; those who are initiated into its deeper life might be tempted, if they restricted their attention to one aspect of the question, to pronounce Paris a city of saints. Enough has already been done to indicate to all except the fanatics of revolution, where it is that the hope of France lies..

This subject is especially illustrated in that portion of the present volume which relates to the *Petites Sœurs des Pauvres*, one of the most recent of orders. Few things are more interesting than to trace the growth of such institutions from the first germ to the developed plant; and to do this is comparatively easy when the order is recent. Mechanism is among Protestants all in all, in spiritual things as well as secular, where more than individualism is attempted; a principle strikingly contrasted with that which in the Catholic Church holds a corresponding place, viz. that of organisation. What is mechanical is made; what is organic grows. The one is fashioned from without, the other is developed from within; the one is dead, the other lives; the one is the work of man, the other that of God. The land swarms with religious joint-stock companies, provided with all the usual mechanism of

managing committees, secretaries, &c. &c. A single day and a single meeting is sufficient to set the machine at work. It is provided with all the external apparatus it can need; not a rope, pulley, or wheel is wanting to it; but let a single joint of the complex structure get out of order, and the whole comes to a standstill. It has no Divine vitality, no recuperative power to correct mischances or adapt old powers to new circumstances. The machine is perfect; but (supposing the end sought to be moral or spiritual) it has one fault, viz. that it will not work. Far otherwise is it with those instrumentalities the law of which is organic, not mechanical, and the source of which is from above. A single holy thought, devout purpose, or sacred sorrow, is dropped like a seed into the heart of a lonely recluse, one without wealth or influence, possibly without ordinary education—like Jeanne Jugan, of whom we read, “she can neither read nor write; but her knowledge of Scripture is great.” The seed grows on in the darkness, and perhaps seems to perish; but after a season the shoot is above ground, minute but alive. It assimilates what surrounds it, and gains strength. Sympathies that move scarce consciously, and an imitative aspiration, like that which prompts children to acquire language, compel persons of the most opposite natural characters to sink their idiosyncrasies and join in one supernatural work. That work is often determined by apparent accident. No grand project has been matured; nothing that is intended to show an original conception or a striking result. The work that lies next at hand—to that the new energy turns itself, even when it had intended otherwise, with a pliancy equal to its

firmness. It is from its work that it learns how to work, and from experience that it learns for what it is destined. Unexpected difficulties occur; but they prove the means of exercising new muscles and developing new strength. Obloquy and reproach come; but they have only the effect of checking self-will and pride, and thus invigorating the enterprise by the touch of its native soil—the Will of God. The order spreads throughout the world, and enriches many races (at war, perhaps, in all beside) with its common benefits. Thrones are subverted, dynasties pass away, languages are lost; but the order remains and extends itself. Multitudes hardly observe it; others see but its abuses, and wonder that an institute a thousand years old should have its cobwebs and its weather-stains. “It should be reformed,” men exclaim; ignorant that in that Church of which it is a child, reformation, in the genuine sense, is not an occasional passion or the convulsion of a crisis, but a chronic work, always going on, and provided for from the first through internal properties,—a part of her own organisation, which needs no aid from the violence of man. In the mean time, as century after century fleets away, the founder, who never thought of himself but as the meanest of men, rises higher and higher in the admiration of a reluctant world; while in the far-spread family which he has founded, he is venerated when the founders of monarchies are forgotten. It is not so much his memory as his presence which abides with his descendants. He inhabits each of the houses which are the palaces and the fortresses of that especial dominion given to him “in the kingdom of the regeneration.” His de-

portment, almost his lineaments, have become a tradition, and stamp the special character of his order; his foot is heard in cloister and corridor; and his smile is not wanting to the missionary as he treads the city courts, or traverses waste and wild.

The relations between the religious orders, social stability, and that systematic charity, in the absence of which the destructive principles of Communism are pretty sure to assert themselves in some form or other, would constitute a worthy subject for the meditations of a philosophic mind. Those who most hate and fear Communism and Socialism, will not, if wise, infer that because they involve fatal errors, they may not also be connected with truths far too deep and vital to be trampled out of memory. The most fatal errors are commonly partial truths, or truths misapplied; otherwise they would not have sufficient permanence to do mischief. Heresies are always based upon truths perverted or isolated; and heresiarchs are commonly men of great faculties, intellectual and moral, turned to destruction through great deficiencies and a perverse will. It is the same thing in those ethical heresies, to which statesmen attach more importance. Nothing is more certain than that, in a very practical sense, all men are equal; and that all good is, or should be, in common. Such principles, so far from being either visionary or destructive, have been the basis of conventional institutions, which have given peace to nations, and outlasted nations. But in Christian ethics the equality and brotherhood of man rests on the ground of his spiritual, not of his secular being. So far from its being true that *naturally* men are equal, nature

makes no two men equal in any one respect; and according to her code, might is right. "Is not one man as good as another?" the English Socialist demanded of his Irish friend. "To be sure he is, *and better!*" was the Hibernian reply. The blundering answer contains a sufficient refutation of all such theories of equality as are founded on natural rights. In religious communities the principle of Communism existed from the first,—but in union with the principles necessary to balance it. In them brotherhood was founded on grace, not nature; it meant brotherhood in Christ, not in the condition of unregenerate man: and the consequence was, that its sanction was one of a spiritual, not of a legal order; and was founded on Divine love, not on "political justice." According to its estimate, men are equal because every man is bound to love his neighbour as himself, not because the poor man has a right to his rich neighbour's property. Such an ethical system can, however, only be recognised where the first commandment of the law holds its due place of superiority relatively to the second, and where the love of God reigns supreme. But where the Love of God exists, the Authority of God must be equally recognised; and the latter, as well as the former, must stand represented in the relations of human society. Accordingly, as long as European institutions were truly Christian, the principle of obedience, as well as that of charity, was embodied in all of them; and in those monastic institutions, which were in the most eminent sense Christian, unconditional obedience was the cement of a system in which brotherhood was also acknowledged in the most unlimited sense. Converse principles

are always needed for mutual support; and as holy matrimony is elevated to the dignity of a sacrament only where celibacy has also its own special honours, so the principle of Christian brotherhood can only be fully and safely carried out where that of Christian obedience is sustained by the same Divine sanction.

Religious communities, then, are the consecration of that instinct of which political communism is the desecration, and ultimately the stultification. They are safety-valves, which carry off what would otherwise prove a noxious enthusiasm. They are at the same time fountains, in which the most beneficial influences are collected, that they may be thence re-distributed over the face of the land. Destroy them, and the instinct they embody must find vent elsewhere; the necessities for which they provide must seek elsewhere for relief. It must be remembered that the Communism which lately terrified, and still undermines Europe, is but the most naked form of that which wears many a Protean disguise. In France, that law which necessitates the perpetual subdivision of estates has already in some instances produced the worst results of Communism, rendering the cultivation of the land almost unproductive. That law belongs to the same period which witnessed the secularisation of monastic property; and if its general operation has been mitigated, that relief has been in proportion to the degree in which conventual institutions have revived in France. In England, the poor-law was a legal re-action produced by the suppression of the monasteries. The poor who had found support at their gates still needed a maintenance, notwithstanding the enormous numbers of them who, in

the reign of Henry VIII., were hanged for the robberies and vagabond life to which his sacrilege had reduced them. A retributive and yet merciful Providence gave them support at the expense of that class chiefly which had fattened on Church lands. We all know how the far-famed statute of Elizabeth has worked. The guardians of the poor have again and again proved more reckless fosterers of pauperism than the monks were ever accused of being; and at one time the evil had advanced to such a height, that land relapsed into waste, and society threatened to break down beneath a complication of disorders, among which, compared with moral diseases proceeding from the same source, even the canker of pauperism was tolerable. The law has been guarded by more stringent provisions, as necessary as they are unpopular; but all such remedies are but quackery. For moral claims and a moral organisation, substitute legal rights and a legal machinery by which the rich are compelled to support the poor; and however you may erect parchment barriers for the preservation of property, you have also introduced a principle, unbending as iron, which, whenever driven home, must amount practically to Communism. It is not long since, in Ireland, a poor-law, the guards and limitations of which soon gave way before the pressure of famine, produced on a large scale the confiscation of property, while it effected little for the preservation of life. If England enjoys a partial exemption at the present moment from a pauperism which for many a year has been the chief scandal of her economists and the chief terror of her statesmen, she owes it to causes which are but temporary; for neither gold-discoveries nor emi-

gration can go on for ever. Yet assuredly she could not get rid of her danger by getting rid of her poor-law. It is an evil necessitated by an evil; and its sudden removal would be followed by the outbreak of a Communism which it at once encourages and keeps at arm's length.

Charity, it has been said, is "twice blessed." Where it is not blessed to the bestower, neither is it blessed to the recipient. Compulsory charity is not real charity, because it lacks a divine motive; and it elicits accordingly a proportionately small amount of gratitude. True charity, if administered with discretion, so far from demoralising, frequently stimulates the recipient to industry, while in many other ways it ennobles his moral nature. Legal charity, on the other hand, tends to produce a greater pressure than it relieves; because what it gives undermines exertion, and the mode in which it gives the embittered alms destroys self-respect.

"Why not then," it is often asked, "leave charity to individual exertion?" The answer is, that for so great a work you require not only exalted motive, but also the multiplied strength which proceeds from co-operation. An army does not differ from a mob more than the moral energy of an organised body differs from that of mere individuals. None of the great offices of society could be carried on without co-operation. We conduct our secular affairs, from the management of a railroad to the government of an empire, by means of co-operative bodies brought together by secular motives, and organised according to a secular law. In moral and spiritual things we require not similar, but

corresponding and analogous methods of co-operation, through which the energies and attainments of each may be multiplied into those of the mass, without derogating from his separate responsibility.

There are many other considerations relating to this subject, at which we can but glance. Where charity is left to mere individual effort, a large number will wholly evade its duties; while on those who are willing to bear it, the burden will often be thrown with an undue weight. On the other hand, if it consists in the distribution of a poor-rate, guardians, who necessarily draw upon the property of others far more largely than on their own, are tempted to a prodigality very far removed from real beneficence; while an undue external pressure is provoked by the existence of a fund apparently inexhaustible. In monasteries, on the other hand, the common proprietorship and the individual interest are so blended, as to produce the maximum of generosity with the minimum of waste. There is also an analogous blending of security with insecurity in monastic property, which contributes to the right use of it. Like other religious institutions, convents commonly possess, if in their normal state, a security which raises them above the temptations of dependence. On the other hand, as corporate bodies, their property has the character of a trust more obviously, if not more really, than the property of private individuals; and as such, its security depends not only on law, but also on public opinion, and consequently on the right use of it. The scandals which have sometimes proved fatal to conventual property are occasional and trivial compared with the riot and debauchery in which a large proportion of private

property is habitually squandered ; nor is it possible for a convent to expect permanence, except through an administration of its worldly goods at once generous and wise. With such aids, it may distribute the wealth of thousands, and connect the charitable efforts of successive generations ; without them, it cannot long keep its own. Once more : so far as the national or public part of charity is administered through convents, there will be a saving of that large fund commonly squandered on administrative functionaries, who only work for hire. The inmates of convents have no families to support, and are themselves, if worthy of their vocation, worthy also of their support, as men devoted to other sacred offices, irrespective of the distribution of charity.

He would be a bold man who should prophesy that, at any time, however remote, poor-houses in England or Ireland will become transformed into convents. At the same time, there would doubtless have been once quite as much to astonish men in the prophecy that monasteries, which for centuries had been temples of God and cities of refuge for the poor, should be alienated at once from religion and the people, and changed into the abodes of private wealth. Without intruding upon the formidable ground of prophecy, we may venture to say thus much,—that the *argumentum ad hominem* will be presented in a not uninteresting form to that portion of the national mind which rejects as speculative whatever does not refer to material interests, from the moment that it can be shown that religious institutions can do, effectually and *cheaply*, what the clumsy and lifeless machinery of the State does at an

enormous cost and peril, and with a very questionable preponderance of gain over loss. Whenever the founder of a new order, or the reformer of an old one, is able not only to say, Charity is a religious work, and we are specially qualified, as religious, to lead the charity of the country; we have a special vocation and a supernatural aim; we unite the strongest motives for individual exertion with the highest development of the co-operative system; we are free from the impediments of other men; what we give establishes no legal or political right, yet it recognises a moral claim, and provides for a human want;—whenever a Christian philosopher is able not only thus to address the statesmen of his country, but also to prove that 1000*l.* a year wisely spent in well-organised charity goes twice as far as 2000*l.* a year spent with a blundering alternation of prodigality and cruelty, he will make an appeal to which many will listen, on whom logic and theology are thrown away. That convents as well as poor-law establishments have often distributed alms without due discrimination and discretion, is not to be denied; and very possibly the dangers resulting from such errors may be more formidable in the present state of society than at an earlier period. It is, however, as we have remarked, the characteristic of organic bodies, that they contain within themselves a principle of endless adaptation. The Church, herself an organic body, is the fruitful mother of all such organisations as the moral needs of man require; nor is there any reason to doubt that she can help the pauper of modern times as easily as the captives, the lepers, and the labourers in mines, for whom her mediæval orders laboured. The recent institution

of the *Petites Savoirs* derives a peculiar interest from the mode in which it approaches that special trial of modern society, pauperism; and it may, with the Divine blessing, advance from its present humble beginnings to enterprises which, alike on the ground of theology and of sound political economy, are beyond the efforts of the most beneficent governments. That power which manifests itself, in a sense not contemplated by the Pagan philosopher, *nusquam majus quam in minimis*, and which teaches one of the smallest of insects to build the coral-reef that resists the shock of angry seas and lays the foundations of continents, may even now be training labourers who toil in darkness and tumult, but whose completed work will be the protection of ancient states and the bulwark of civilisation. The nations of antiquity were in some measure protected from the evils of pauperism by constant wars, and still more by the institution of slavery. When these sufficed not to meet the pressure, it was found necessary to divert what could no longer be averted; and the balance was redressed by means of those barbaric irruptions and national migrations, under which the civilisation of weaker but more refined communities lay submerged for centuries. We are not likely to return to the ancient methods of dealing with the difficulty, and we have not succeeded in discovering a new one; though philosophers of the modern intelligence have propounded very remarkable theories on the subject: some of them "forbidding to marry" on a scale that no ascetic writers have ever been reproached with attempting; and others not shrinking from remedies which, in their scholastic form, are called "painsless

extinction," and which, when reduced to practice in the too-celebrated "burial-clubs," are illustrated by the less eupheuistic title of "Godfrey's Cordial." Surely it is time for thoughtful persons "of all creeds" and of none, to inquire dispassionately and in earnest, whether some help may not be found for evils which can neither be cured by workhouses, clubs, establishments of "Christian Communism," or any other reversed and inverted form of conventualism, in institutions coeval and co-extensive with Christian society;—institutions which rose as soon as persecution ceased to render the whole Christian life a life of mortification; which were the chief means of propagating Christianity in remote lands; under the shade of which the learning as well as the political franchises of Europe grew up; which have never been trampled down but to rise again; and which have at all times devoted themselves to charitable works, though they have refused to separate human from Divine charity, or either from the true knowledge and constant adoration of God.

Those institutions advance among us once more, with their twofold dowry of Divine graces and the scorn of worldly men. The name of nun cannot be expiated by a life of labour, vigil, and love; and the veil which hangs between the world and the heart which has renounced it for ever, is thick enough to hide from that world what would, to eyes that can see, have been the image of virtue itself, reflected from a supernal antitype of glorified endurance. In the mean time conventual institutions advance; and advance as a sign to be spoken against, and that the thoughts of many hearts may be known. With an influence silen

as light and refreshing as dew, they have to teach most gentle lessons to men of good-will;—to souls conformed and configured with truth, and to breasts in which the words of peace find, without demonstration, a natural echo. They have severer lessons for men who, though conscious of prejudice and unashamed, are yet false enough to arrogate to themselves the title of Truth-lovers;—men whom proud intelligence has made blind, and false strength has made weak. Besides such lessons, they will bring us other blessings, on some of which we have touched, though from discussing the greater number our limits have precluded us. If rejected from the threshold of the nation, and compelled to shake the dust from their feet, there remains, besides the spiritual loss, that Nemesis of Communism and anarchy which cannot but visit a nation that will not learn, and that repeats in the nineteenth century, and after fifty years of babble respecting religious liberty, the sacrilege and the spoliation which in the sixteenth century dishonoured God and defrauded the poor. If accepted, they will not only prove the noblest forms of organised charity, and the greatest incentive to individual exertion besides, but they will also elevate the whole character of benevolence, in a nation eminent both for that and every other good gift that belongs to the natural order. Natural benevolence is more ready to feel for than with the sufferer. Working commonly through some mechanical agency, it takes mechanical and material views of things: it sweeps away distress from before its face, as it buries its dead “out of its sight;” and the poor man, who is to be relieved if he will keep his distance, is counted, if near, an eye-sore, a scandal, and a nuisance. At least, it

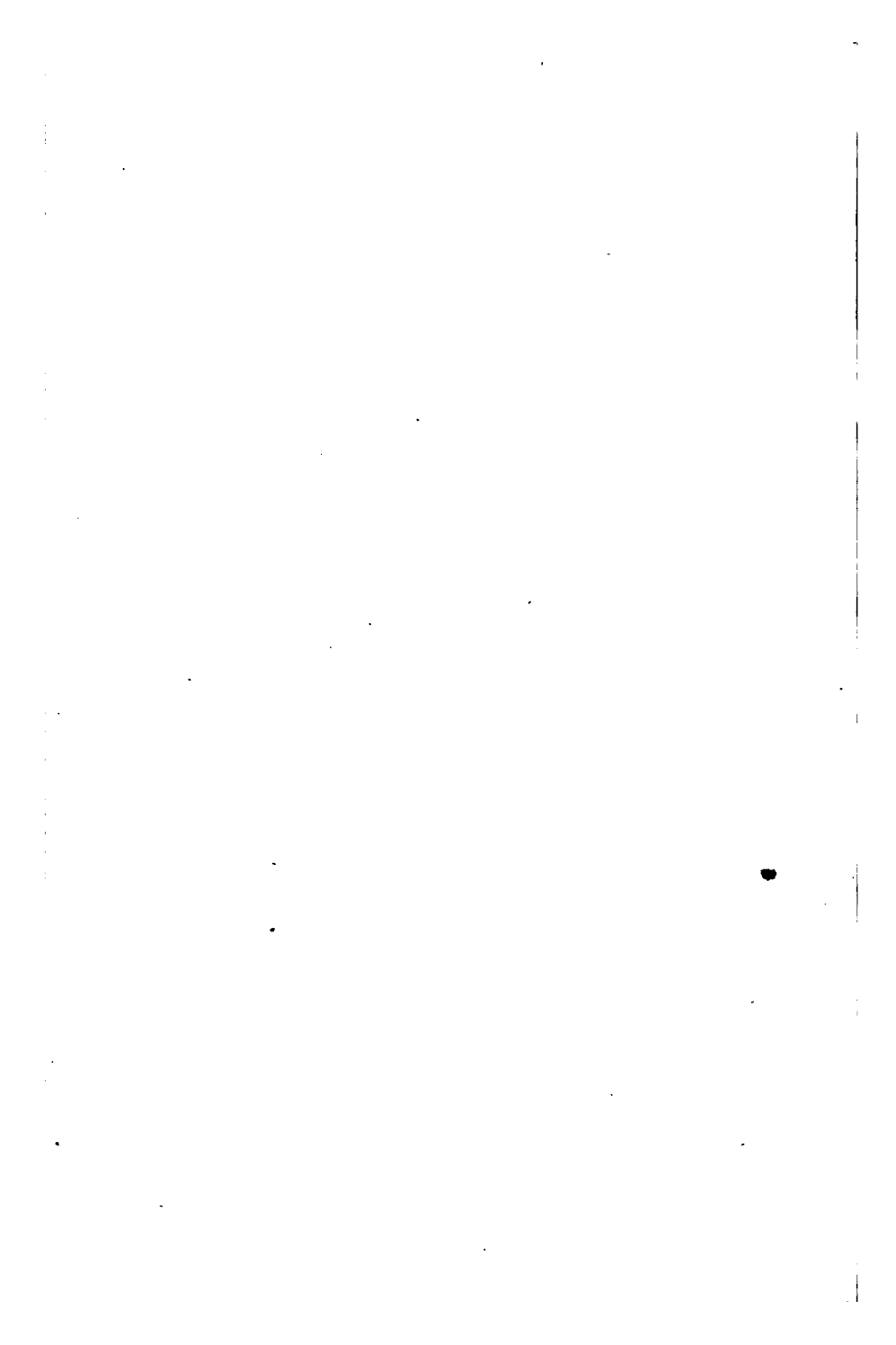
does not imitate Him who "laid His hands" on those whom He healed, and who declined not the access either of sinner or sufferer. Christian charity not only bears with, but venerates the poor man whom it relieves. It takes no offence at rags. Falsehood, and every other offence which is especially the temptation of the destitute, it neither resents as a personal affront, nor rages about as an offence against taste, honour, and society; but regards it as a sin against God, and measures it impartially as such in the scale of crime, according to the Divine standard of right and wrong. It is prompt to observe the virtues which also belong especially, not only to the poor, but to the poorest of the poor. In short, it sees Christ in His suffering members; and to relieve Him in them is an act of devotion as well as of beneficence. Christian charity is a Sacrament—one of those which belong to a life the whole of which has been rendered sacramental through the Incarnation; and many even of those who have not renounced it, partake of it without "discerning" the mystery.

Against such errors, common, though far from universal in Protestant lands, the charity of the convents is a perpetual and effectual protest. Like all other moral errors, they rest ultimately on defective, distorted, partial, or positively false views respecting theology, and man's relations towards God and his neighbour. The most exact dogmatic refutation of them, however, would probably do less to correct the evil than a careful and reverential perusal of biographies such as the present volume contains. Such holy persons as it records are among the chief instrumentalities through which the Spirit of Holiness is pleased to work in this lower world;

and it is in no small measure through the sympathy with which the human heart regards their actions and their sufferings, that the human mind is enlightened with an intelligence more piercing than any worldly wisdom, and enabled to understand the true character both of the trials which belong to man's estate, and of their remedies.

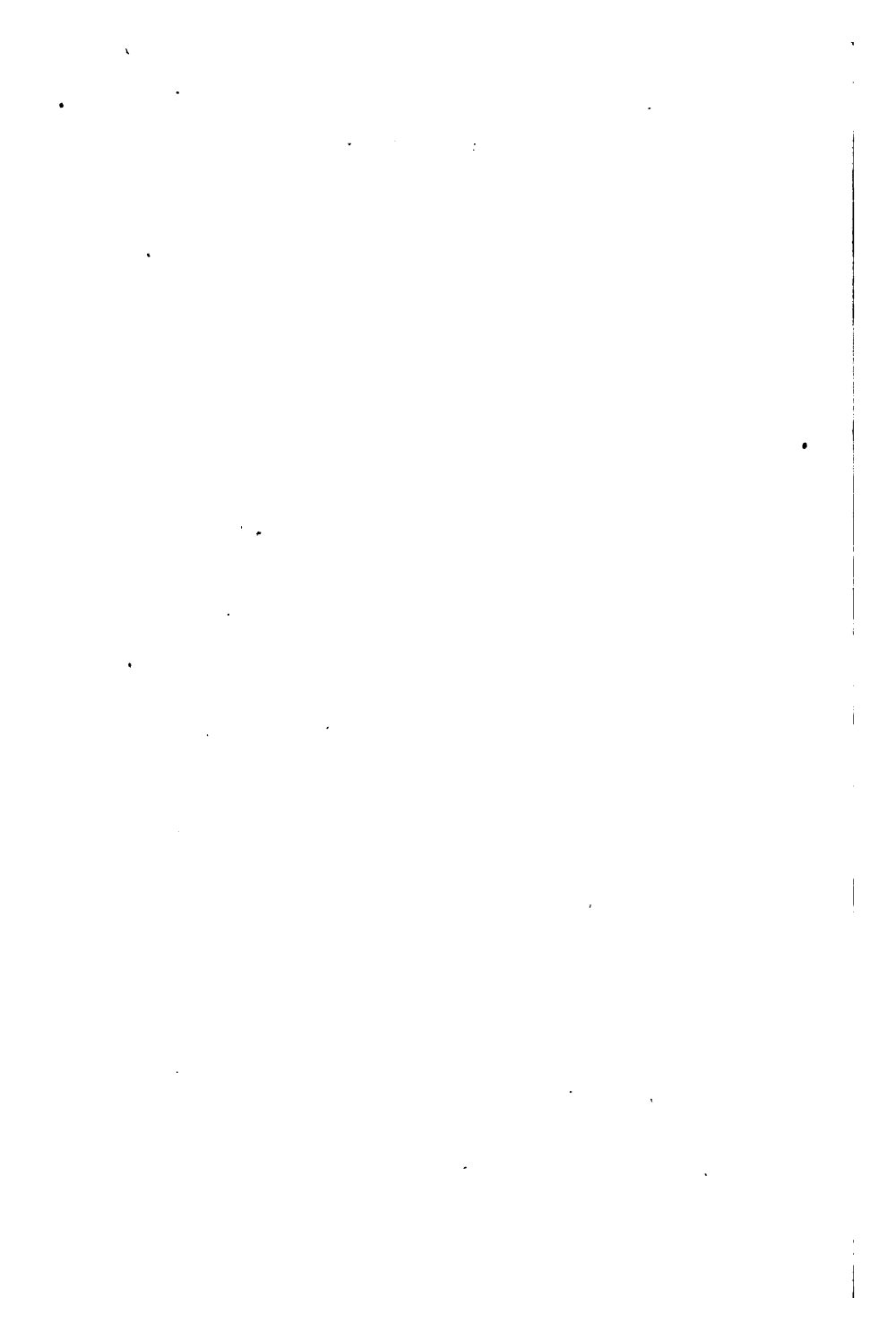
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A decorative border of stylized vines and leaves surrounds the title and chapter heading. At the top center is a small circular emblem containing a cross.

THE SISTERS OF VINCENNES.

CHAPTER I.

IN the year 1839 the Bishop of Vincennes, a remote diocese in North America, visited France in order to procure additional aid for the spiritual wants of the flock committed to his care. The special object of his mission was to provide the means of instructing in the first principles of the Faith the vast multitude of children and young persons whom he saw springing up around him on every side in a country as yet utterly destitute of those schools and confraternities which, amid a Catholic population, seem to have a natural and spontaneous growth proportioned to the requirements of each locality. With a jurisdiction embracing all the state of Indiana and part of Illinois, equal in extent, perhaps, to the whole of Great Britain, the number of thirty priests, thinly scattered over this vast territory, with a revenue barely adequate to their subsistence, constituted nearly all the resources which the Bishop could command for conveying the knowledge of the Faith to a population of between two and three millions of souls.

It would seem as if the churches of young America were to resemble those of the Old World in having Saints for their founders; or, at least, as if it were a general rule in the order of God's providence, that the

seed on the Church, if not always watered with the blood of martyrs, should yet be nurtured and matured by the superhuman toils of her holiest confessors. Such was undoubtedly the spirit which characterised each individual among the clergy of M. Brûté, the predecessor of M. de la Hailandière, and the first Bishop of Vincennes, the diocese of which we have been speaking. Their lives were literally spent in making the circuit of the vast districts committed to their care,—none of them, probably, of less extent than one of our large English counties,—imparting to the scattered Catholic inhabitants such instruction and consolation as they needed, and above all, giving them the blessed opportunity of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice. Oftentimes the regular course of these expeditions was interrupted by the necessity of visiting the sick at the distance, perhaps, of sixty or eighty miles from their temporary resting-place, and in spite of almost insurmountable obstacles arising from the inclemency of the weather. It not unfrequently happened that during the severe winter's nights of that rigorous climate, after crossing flooded and half-frozen rivers, the priest would lose his way, and be compelled to pass the whole night in the midst of the forests. Reduced to a mat, or at most to a few feathers stuffed into a cloth, and a thin coverlet, for a bed; destitute of linen, of clothing, and sometimes even of bread; the only reward upon which these poor missionaries could count was the unspeakable joy arising from self-devotion in such a cause, and the assurance that the blessing of their Divine Master rested upon their labours.

But that which mainly encouraged these devoted men to persevere was the bright example set them by M. Brûté, their Bishop. If in any thing they were denying to themselves and charitable to others, he was still more so. Nay, of all his flock, they were themselves the dearest objects of his paternal tenderness and care. A native of Brittany, his earnest piety and single-minded trust in God had attracted, while he was yet a youth, the notice and admiration of his neighbours. Whilst

at the Seminary of Rennes, a countryman of his, M. de la Guitterie, who was revered throughout Brittany as a saint, and who, after having more than once refused the burden of the episcopal office, died parish priest of Vitré, had been afflicted with a swelling in the side, which all the remedies of medicine had failed to reduce. M. Brûté, having formerly practised medicine, had himself several times endeavoured to relieve him; but without effect. The disorder increased daily, and the sufferings of the patient became extreme. One day, when he was going to say Mass, M. Brûté, seeing that his friend could only move with difficulty, promised that he would pray for him. No sooner was Mass over than M. de la Guitterie felt himself relieved. He was no longer sensible of pain, and upon examination the swelling was found to be gone. M. Brûté, being informed of the circumstance, expressed no surprise, but simply observed that it was always right to have recourse to the providence of God when every human expedient had failed. And this simple trust in God never failed him at any moment of his life.

It may readily be imagined how powerful an encouragement to a small but devoted body of clergy was the pattern of such a Bishop. Great as their own sufferings might be, they saw that the Bishop invariably provided that his own should be even greater. All his worldly possessions were placed at their disposal. Whenever any of them came to his house, they were at liberty to take away with them shoes, clothes, or linen, any thing that they could find there of which they stood in need, only taking care to leave in exchange their own cast-off apparel, in the certainty that by and by some one would come in a more pitiable plight than themselves, to whom even this would be an object of value. What was taken by nobody else the Bishop appropriated to his own use; and in such cases it often happened that, as he was small of stature, it was necessary that his own skill should be exercised in fitting them to his person. Some of his garments, thus sewn by his own

hands, are still preserved as precious relics at Vincennes; a treasure scarcely less valuable in the eyes of its inhabitants than would be a vestment of St. Ambrose or of St. Charles Borromeo to a native of Milan, or the identical cloak (supposing that it were known to be in existence) that was left at Troas by the Apostle of the Gentiles to a Christian of Philadelphia or of Corinth.

When M. Brûlé visited his clergy, he never would allow the priest to give up his bed to him; nor did he relax this rule even in his last sickness. He used to insist upon the priest being the first to lie down; and after smoothing his couch for him with the gentle tenderness of a mother, he would wish him good night. If, as was sometimes the case, the apartment of the priest was not separated from that appropriated to Divine worship, the Bishop would spend the whole night in prayer before his beloved Master. If otherwise, he would lie down on the floor, or on the same bed with the priest. One cold winter's night, a few months before his death, a priest, whose hut he had visited, was very earnest in pressing him to make use of his bed. The Bishop was not to be persuaded. At last a compromise was effected. It was agreed that they should remove the bed from its bedstead, and placing it on the floor, should make use of it together. Accordingly, they lay down side by side, the Bishop not forgetting his usual practice of smoothing down the bed-clothes for his companion, and then covering him up in such a manner as would best protect him from the cold.

"But, my lord," said the priest, "you are giving me all the coverlet, and keeping none of it for yourself."

"Oh, no," replied the holy man with his wonted sprightliness of manner, "look, you have got no more than the half!"

During the night his companion discovered that the Bishop was stealthily contriving to shift more of the coverlet away from himself and on to him. At first he threw it back again, imitating the motion of a person tossing about in his sleep. Again the Bishop en-

deavoured to restore it to the priest, but as gently as possible, for fear of awakening him, and again a toos similar to the former returned it to its original position.

"Ah, ah," said the Bishop, "then you are not asleep, I see." And thus the contest terminated in a mutual burst of laughter, such as would gush forth with a natural simplicity from hearts like theirs, devoted to the love of poverty and abandonment of self. The priest, however, remonstrated with his lordship for his imprudence, upon which the latter excused himself by saying that he was afraid lest he should catch cold, and he dared not get up and stir the fire lest he should disturb him in his sleep. "Yes," persisted the priest; "but what was to have become of yourself?"

"Oh," said the Bishop, "nothing can be of any consequence that happens to a poor old man like me."

It was then about three o'clock in the morning, and the Bishop refused to get into bed again, on the plea that he had a good many prayers to say; and so he continued in meditation until the time came for his departure.

In fact, prayer was with M. Brûté the constant habit of his soul. It seemed perpetually to breathe forth from his heart, like perfume from a flower. It is impossible to describe the fervour with which he would lift up his heart to God by night and by day; nor did he ever interrupt his spiritual exercises, but to devote himself to the cares of his episcopal office, or to reflect on the means at his disposal for the relief and succour of his clergy. It occurred to him one night, for example, when in the midst of his prayers, that one of his priests must be in want of money. Having none of his own, he hastily borrowed a few dollars in the town, and despatched them to him at once, together with a letter, bidding him apply to him whenever he required any more; and this was the practice he invariably enjoined upon all his clergy.

The Bishop was in the habit of frequently visiting a priest who lived at the distance of some leagues,

No sooner had he returned from one of his visitations, than he would set off, staff in hand; and with buoyant spirits, employing himself all the time in prayer, proceed on foot to the dwelling of his friend. On his arrival he would draw a large piece of bread out of his pocket, saying, "I have brought you something for dinner, for I was sure you had nothing to eat." To this was added, perhaps, a small portion of the bacon peculiar to those parts, prepared in a little kettle, and set on the only plate in the room. And this frugal meal the two ecclesiastics would proceed to discuss, each seated on a wooden bench, at a table fashioned by an ingenuity better practised in the direction of souls than in the handling of the tools of a carpenter. Nor were the other implements out of keeping with the simplicity of the fare; there was but one knife and fork, which they used alternately.

We make no apology to our readers for the recital of these touching details in the life of M. Br  t  , though our narrative more properly belongs to the episcopate of his successor. For it must always be a matter of interest and a source of deep consolation to the sincere Christian, to hear of such tender and affectionate devotion to the service of God, and such complete self-sacrifice in the work of saving souls, exhibited in our own times as in the early ages of the Church. The deeds of such a man, reminding us, in their degree, of the labours of a St. Francis of Sales, the sleepless vigils of a St. Ignatius of Loyola, and the burning love of a St. Philip Neri, should not be suffered to fall into oblivion; but, on the contrary, ought carefully to be had in remembrance. *In memoria aeterna erit justus.* Referring our readers to the letter of Sister Theodore farther on, for other interesting details of the life and labours of this apostolic man, we now proceed to the more immediate subject of these pages.

CHAPTER II.

OUR narrative commences with the year in which Monseigneur Brûlé departed to his reward. In the little market-town of Ruillé on the Loire, there was settled at that time a congregation of religious women, under the title of Sisters of Providence. M. de la Hailandière, who had succeeded M. Brûlé in the See of Vincennes, had cast his eye upon this community, as one from which he should wish to introduce an offshoot into the immense diocese which he had been called to govern. At the time of his visit to the convent for the purpose of making this proposal, the Sisters were all engaged in their periodical retreat. To none of them had the thought ever occurred of becoming an instrument in the hand of God for spreading the Catholic Faith over the trackless wilds of North America. They were but a small community, maintaining themselves not without difficulty, and exercising their various works of charity within very limited bounds. The hearts of the good Sisters, however, were equal to greater things than these. Their courage was not damped by the vastness of the undertaking, but they at once acceded to the invitation of the Bishop with cheerful and generous devotion; six Sisters were chosen, and it was determined that they should join the Bishop in America the following year.

It may be easily conceived with what zeal the Sisterhood of Ruillé would bring all its resources to bear upon so important an enterprise. Its own coffers were speedily exhausted; and when the charity of the neighbourhood had also been drawn upon to the utmost, the sum placed at the disposal of the Sisters amounted to no more than about one hundred and twenty pounds. This, it must be acknowledged, was but a small provision for a journey to a country situated upwards of

the Bishop resided. But they were still seventy-five miles from the spot where it was intended that they should erect their habitation. They set out, accompanied by a priest, and plunged into the wilderness. At length the priest stopped the conveyance, and informed them that they had reached their journey's end. They alighted, and found themselves in the midst of a thick wood. They were then shown some buildings in an unfinished state, and were informed that this was to be their future abode. At a little distance was a kind of cabin roughly made of planks, and occupied by a family. The first inquiry of the Sisters was for the chapel. In reply, they were led to a hut made of trunks of trees, placed lengthways one above another, of twelve feet in length by nine in width. The door, unrestrained by any iron-work about it, would neither open nor shut. On one side they could see a large chimney, down which some rays of light found their way into the apartment. In a corner was placed a wretched truckle-bed, where the priest slept who had the care of this strange church. At the other end was a little window, stopped up with pieces of cloth and sticks to keep out the cold, which was beginning to make itself felt. Finally, some curtains hung carefully round a few boards indicated the only substitute for a tabernacle in this rude sanctuary. No sooner had the Sisters adored their Divine Master, under circumstances which forcibly reminded them of His lowly birthplace at Bethlehem, than they felt how much better they fared than He, and blushed at their own momentary weakness. They found accommodation sufficient for their immediate wants with the family hard by. A small room was given up to them, in which they lived by day, and a corn-loft, which they made their dormitory. God's blessing was on their work from the first; they were joined by four postulants on the very evening of their arrival. And as the Lord's house is built, not with stones wrought by the hands of men, but rather with the living stones of hearts formed and fashioned to His will, it may be said with

truth that on that day was founded the convent of *Saint Mary of the Woods*.

Under M. de Hailandière's predecessor the diocese of Vincennes had been principally inhabited by Indians, of the tribe of the Potowatomies, of whose simple faith the following touching story is recorded: A priest who lived among them, falling dangerously ill, sent a neophyte for the nearest of his brethren to come and afford him the aid he needed for his last journey. The Indian soon returned with the intelligence that the other "Black Robe" was ill also, and unable to come. The poor priest, finding his end approaching, could not resign himself to dying without the sacraments. He caused himself to be carried into his church, and by a more than human effort he ascended to the altar, and celebrated the Holy Mysteries. After the Communion, buried in the idea of the Divine Presence, and in the feeling of the love of his God, he fell into one of those ecstasies, which are a foretaste of the eternal happiness which our Lord bestows upon elect souls. The Indians solemnly surrounded the altar in silence, recollection, and prayer. When at length he came to himself, they placed him on his mat; and a few minutes afterwards he expired. They then laid the body in the church, and strewed round it sweet-scented plants. It was not until some days after, that the priest who had been sent for arrived; and finding what had happened, he told the Indians that the body must be buried.

"We will not bury the 'Black Robe,'" said they. "Who would there be then to speak to us of the good God? who would guide us to heaven?"

"My children," replied the priest, "he can do no more for you; you see he is dead."

The Indians shook their heads. "We will come to the church at our usual hours," they said; "and to see him will be as though he spoke to us. We will call to mind all that he has ever said;"—and it was not without difficulty that the priest succeeded in overruling their objection to losing sight of their beloved teacher.

But now the diocese of Vincennes was no longer inhabited by these good Indians; they had been driven further into the desert by the arbitrary act of the Governor of the United States, to make way for its colonisation by the less pious, but more civilised, white man. They were replaced, therefore, by emigrants from every country in Europe; from Ireland, France, Germany, and, more than all, from England. These emigrants belong to every religious community imaginable, and in reality hold to none. In matters of faith they are often as ignorant, but seldom as simple-minded, as the savages. Many children are brought up without so much as hearing the name of God or religion mentioned, in order that they may have the power of making an unbiassed choice at a later period. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that persons often live and die there without receiving a single sacrament. Things were in this frightful state when M. de la Hailandière invited the Sisters of Providence to come and found educational institutions in his diocese. It was not without much suffering that their object was accomplished. The little loft, for instance, which served them for a dormitory, was so small, and the beds in it were so closely packed together, that the occupant of the last could only reach it by walking over all the rest. There was no room, moreover, to move them ever so little on one side, if at any time it was desired to place them out of the reach of the snow or the rain. Thus was passed the long and severe winter of 1840. In July 1841 they were able to remove to their new house, and there they opened a school. Here they had some enjoyments; but they had also their trials. As it was the aim of the Sisters to reintroduce the feelings and habits of religion among a population which had lost them entirely, they received children of every communion, on the sole condition that they would conform to the practice of the house. The eagerness of these children to be instructed in the truths of religion, and the impressions which they received of it, caused the most lively satisfaction to their instruc-

tresses. A young girl, for example, of fourteen or fifteen years old, belonging to one of the Protestant communions, but newly arrived at the school, was very much astonished to see the community at prayers. To her inquiry as to what they had been doing, her companions replied that they had been praying to the good God.

"What is the good God?" asked she. Upon which the other children began to explain to her that it was the good God who had created her, and had given her a soul. "I have a soul, then?" she said with astonishment. "But what is a soul?"

Among those poor children ignorance of this kind is quite of ordinary occurrence. After this girl had spent some time at the boarding-school, she came to the Superiress, and earnestly entreated her to give her a rosary.

"But, my dear child," said the Superiress, "you know very well that rosaries are for the little Catholics."

"Never mind," replied the girl, "I will wear it on my neck: and I will be the Blessed Virgin's little child."

It is needless to say that the house of the Lord had not been forgotten. An altar covered with painted paper, and decked with two candlesticks brought from France, with tapers which they manufactured themselves, seemed to the good Sisters a luxury which they could not sufficiently admire; and they loved to keep their little chapel in that perfect state of neatness and cleanliness which made it an emblem of the purity of their hearts.

It was not long before they turned their thoughts to the second end of their institute, that of visiting the poor. The alms which they had to distribute were mostly of the spiritual kind; they could console or instruct, but they could do little towards relieving temporal necessities. Nevertheless their visits were every where received with the warmest welcome, and, by

God's blessing, were crowned with abundant fruits. The mothers would lay aside their work, and sit down by the side of the Sisters, eager to hear from their lips the words of Divine truth, and overwhelming them with questions. The children, in their happy simplicity, as the light of faith broke upon their young hearts, would kiss their medals and their rosary; and when, after several hours of instruction and conversation, the Sister arose to depart, they would cling to her gown, entreating her to stay and tell them yet more about the God who was so good to them.

In process of time, the little community was joined by another Sister from Ruillé. They had also under their direction seventeen young Americans, either as postulants or as novices. Yielding to the requests which were addressed to them, they formed new establishments at Jasper, and at St. Francis' town. A Sister and a novice proceeded to open a school in each of those towns, and their installation there was the occasion of a public festival, especially at Jasper. The Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession by the Bishop, under triumphal arches made of boughs of trees decorated with flowers; numbers of birds of gorgeous plumage, distributed among the branches, saluted with songs and flapping of wings the Saviour of the world; and thus rational and irrational creatures conspired to do Him homage, as in the processions which we read of among the Indians of Paraguay on the Festival of Corpus Christi.

But in the midst of all this prosperity, and whilst many and pressing demands were being made upon them from all quarters, the Sisters were visited with a calamity, by which it pleased God to blight at one stroke all their brightest hopes, and to put their faith and courage once more to the test. By dint of hewing down the forest, and clearing some of the land which the Bishop had given them, they had at last brought into existence a small country farm at St. Mary of the Woods. The corn was now reaped; and each day, when the labours of teaching were over, the Sisters

would come and share in the rougher work of trussing up the corn and making the sheaves. On one of these occasions, their buildings, which were of wood, took fire in several places, and were burnt to the ground, together with all the corn and implements of husbandry which they contained. What added to the weight of their misfortune was, that they had incurred a debt in the formation of their establishment; and that now, seeing so considerable a portion of it destroyed, their creditors became alarmed, and demanded payment, or at least security for payment. This threw them into the greatest distress. For several days they were even in want of bread; nevertheless their confidence in God did not fail them, and they refused to entertain a thought of abandoning their design. In truth, it did not need a very great sum to repair their disaster; about 20,000 francs (eight hundred pounds) would have sufficed to save them from ruin; but it was beyond the power of the poor Catholics of Indiana and their Bishop to raise such a sum. In this extremity, the idea occurred to them of undertaking a voyage to France; and, with the approbation of the Bishop, Sister Theodore recrossed the ocean, accompanied by a young American novice of the tribe Otohara. They visited several towns, and met every where with the sympathy which such acts of devotion naturally inspired; and when they set out on their return with the money they had collected, two more postulants accompanied them. Arrived at Saint Mary of the Woods, they did not forget their friends in France. The Superioress knew how much they would be pleased to hear the history of her return, and of the goodness of God that had been manifested towards her little community. The following letter, written, without any view to publication, in the depths of the American forests, and amid many interruptions from sickness, or the necessities of travel, or the duties of her state in the instruction of children, will nevertheless command the interest of all our readers:

CHAPTER III.

"GENTLEMEN,—The good-will you have shown us has made us feel that you would be glad to hear of our doings in a foreign land; while your piety will appreciate our feelings of thankfulness to God for having called us hither to be instruments in His hands for the fulfilment of the gracious works of His providence.

"On the 28th of November, 1843, after having communicated, as on the preceding days, with the intention that Jesus might be our *viaticum* from France to America, perhaps even from the ocean to heaven, we were busy in finishing the last letters we should be able to write to those we were leaving behind; and my mind was so fully occupied, that I never once thought of the *Nashville*, the vessel in which we were to sail, though the time of its departure had been left undetermined. At two in the afternoon, the captain sent to tell us that we must lose no time in embarking; for that they had been waiting for us since six in the morning, and were even now setting sail. We recommended ourselves to God, left our papers and whatever else belonged to us to take care of themselves, and reached the quay just in time to see our vessel pass, without being able to go on board. The police demanded our passports, and we had none to give. Happily, the superintendent was informed of our trouble, and ordered that we should be allowed to pass. The ship was already at some distance, but we overtook it in a boat; and shortly after, the steam-tug, which had towed it out, returned, leaving us on the open sea. It is a painful moment when the steamer again takes the direction of the port, carrying back with it the friends and the children of the poor voyagers, who gaze after it long after all trace of it has disappeared. We felt at that moment that we were going to prove, even better than by letters, our gratitude to our dear friends in

France; since we were going to make them participators with us in all the merit of our long and perilous voyage. Accepting in this intention the fatigues and dangers of the passage, we said earnestly to God, 'For us be the sufferings by sea and the storms of the ocean; for those good brothers be the sweet pleasures of home and country, the beautiful festivals of our holy religion, and the happiness of multiplying for many years their works of mercy towards others.' How often have I since made the same prayer!

"We were detained in the Channel five days by a contrary wind; scarcely were we on the main before the ship rolled heavily, and again we experienced all the disagreeable effects of sea-sickness. On the evening of the 14th of December, at sunset, after a glorious day, I was watching the twilight gradually waning away, until it finally gave place to the darkness, and the stars that shone forth in the blue sky above, and were reflected in the depths below, whilst a fresh breeze was lightly speeding our bark over the waves. I was absorbed in the recollection of God's mercies during the past, and in the hope of experiencing them yet more for the future; I was almost fancying myself to be still in the beautiful chapel of our dear Visitandines at Paris, in which I had received the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. I was recalling to my remembrance also the good Carmelite nuns, whose fervent piety I had admired at Mans; and thinking that perhaps they were praying for us at that very moment, I united myself to their prayers. All alike were silent on board the vessel, the passengers barely exchanging a few words with each other—for such magnificent sights naturally move to thought—when, all on a sudden, fearful cries resounded throughout the ship. My first impulse was to rush towards the wretch from whom they proceeded; he was a sailor, who was being punished for the fault of intoxication. Of course I could not oppose this exercise of discipline; but, some minutes afterwards, the captain fell down, and lay stretched and motionless on

the ground, so flushed as to make us suppose that he was suffering from congestion of the brain. I proposed to bleed him. You may imagine how troubled I was to see him in such a condition. We were beginning a long voyage at the worst season of the year, and he was the only man on board who was capable of managing our vessel. But, thanks be to God, he recovered almost as soon as the vein was opened. His danger arose from his irritable disposition, added to the violent exertion of pitching the drunken sailor into the hold.

"The weather during the next few days was splendorous; and so hopeful were we of a good voyage, that I had expected to have nothing to tell you about it but that it was dull and prosperous. Little did I dream of those terrible scenes which I must now describe. In the night between Saturday and Sunday the wind changed. On the Monday, towards five o'clock in the evening, it began to blow furiously, and the waves rose to a prodigious height. The captain recognised his danger in a moment, and he put the ship to drive before the wind. So violent was the storm, that it took the sailors more than two hours to reef the mainsail alone. The noise of the waves breaking over the frail bark was like the report of a cannon. We thought ourselves lost, and that each successive moment would be our last. We were shut up in our little cabins, six feet long by four in breadth, a space scarcely larger than a grave. Sister Cecilia* and I occupied one cabin, the postulants another. I need not tell you that we did not sleep; death seemed close at hand, and we prayed. Those ocean-heaps, those thunderings of mighty waters that kept rolling over our heads, had in them something so awful, that, seeing our only hope was in appeasing the anger of God, I went in search of the young postulants, that we might all join together in prayer. With all the earnestness in our power, we offered to our Lord the sacrifice of our lives. The waves seemed only impatient

* The young Indian Sister who had accompanied Sister Theodore to France.

to accept it, and to put an end to that terrible scene. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning, and we were bathed in perspiration from the mere fatigue occasioned by the violent motion of the vessel, and the exertions we were obliged to make in order to keep ourselves from falling. The billows struck the ship with redoubled fury; and during one shock, more fearful than the rest, the water burst in at the after-part of the vessel, and rushing through a broken port-hole, threatened to inundate us in our cabin.

"Poor terrified Cecilia exclaimed, 'Mother, take me near you; the time is come for us to die.' But no, the hour had not yet arrived. The captain, assisted by one of the sailors, rushed to stop the opening, and almost succeeded in making fast the port-hole by nailing boards and canvas over it; they could not, however, place us entirely beyond the reach of the water. The sea now caused another disturbance upon deck, by breaking asunder some ropes and pulleys; three huge chains which held the boats, in which were placed the cow, the pigs, turkeys, &c. were broken; some of the sheep were swept away by the waves, the remainder were left on the brink of the yawning gulf. The poor passengers amidships were soaked completely through; some were praying, others weeping; no one thought they had a minute longer to live.

"But 'they that go down to the sea in ships, doing business in the great waters; these have seen the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep;' and it is their duty to 'give glory to Him, and to tell His wonderful works to the children of men' (Psalm cvi. 23, 31).

"We have had a lively sense of this sweet obligation; and it is a pleasure to us to relate the gracious acts of God to you, who are able to appreciate them. At eight o'clock the wind ceased; at nine, the captain came and informed us that the danger was over for the present. He did right to say *for the present*: for in a winter's voyage on the ocean, as in that from earth to heaven,

we are never truly out of danger until we are in port. The clouds were now of a yellowish tinge, the atmosphere was thick; and although the wind no longer raged, yet the sea continued to heave, and to utter, as it were, most ominous groans.

"Tuesday was spent in profiting by this treacherous calm to repair the losses of the night. The fire-places, which had been displaced by the storm, and several other things besides, were restored to their proper places. As for us, we employed ourselves in giving thanks to God. Towards evening a gale sprung up, and our poor fowls, that had lost their house the evening before, were carried off into the sea, together with a pretty little rabbit, with which we had made so intimate an acquaintance that it used to creep uninvited into our pockets. In the night, the renewed tossing of the vessel caused all our hopes to fail. The morning of the next day, Wednesday, brought with it the wind and storm again, together with the repetition of the same scenes of horror as before, only in a more fearful degree. The *Nashville* was again 'brought-to,' and even the ropes were coiled, to prevent their being caught by the wind. This second storm began about eight o'clock; an hour after, our only boat was swept away, and with it all hope of escape in case of shipwreck. You cannot conceive how frightful it is to see nothing between oneself and eternity but a few planks nailed together, against which the winds and waves have let loose all their fury. The Holy Ghost has revealed to us these feelings of anguish (Psalm cvi. 26, 27). Yes, how true it is that the soul melts and pines away at the sight of the danger, when one is lifted up to the heavens by the waves, and then hurried down again to the depths. Not a billow but dragged away with it something from off the deck; the brooms, the pails, the benches were quickly engulfed; they seemed to say to us as they fell into the sea, 'To-day for me, to-morrow for you.'

"Before four o'clock in the afternoon it was quite dark. If a storm is dreadful by day, it is still more awful

by night. The lamps cannot be lighted, nor can any thing be distinguished save the white foam of the billows, which seem greedy to devour you. We assembled together for prayer. We looked for no more repose in this world; and though the tossing of the ship threw us all into a perspiration, yet the thought of our weariness never entered our minds. We had begun our devotion in the 'Way of the Cross,' and had offered anew to the dying Jesus the sacrifice of our lives. In spite of the terrors of our weak nature, we were able to say to Him with confidence, 'My God, I commit my soul entirely into Thy hands!' We addressed ourselves to our good Mother; for it was Mary who had chosen our ship, and we had made a vow to her Immaculate Heart. In examining if, at the period of undertaking my voyage, I had had any human views in the selection of our route, my conscience restored my confidence; for I had intrusted all to her.

"I do not know how long the devotion of the Way of the Cross lasted; but the storm raged terribly during the whole of it. Nevertheless, when we followed Jesus upon Calvary, when we thought upon His sorrows, our own became less. It was for us and for our love that He died upon the cross; it was for Him that we were going to perish on board the *Nashville*, if such was His will. What strength does not the soul draw into itself in prayer! And in the midst of the storm, how sweet is the calm that is felt in the Heart of Jesus!

"After we had ended our Way of the Cross, we felt ourselves strengthened; and our Lord seemed to say to us, as heretofore to His Apostles, 'Now rest awhile.' I persuaded my sisters, therefore, to go to sleep, while I remained watching by their side. While looking on those poor children, I asked our Lord whether a frightful death was to be the hundredfold that He had promised in this world to those who leave all to follow Him? I prayed Him to excuse my weakness, and that it might be His will to give me some little token of hope. I opened a book of devotion, and lighted on this

passage of the 107th Psalm: 'They cry to the Lord in their distress, and He maketh the waves be still.' Shortly after, the captain came to tell us that the danger was now abated; but that he feared another storm, and that then the rolling would become more intolerable than ever. It was then four in the morning. I thanked God with all my heart when I learnt that we were out of danger for the present; for I confess that it cost me a pang to resign myself to die without seeing once more our dear house of St. Mary in the Woods.

"After we had returned thanks in common to our heavenly Father, we crept out of our cabins. It was impossible for us to stand upright; we 'reeled like drunken men.' On deck we learnt that a child of eight years old had died in the night. Some said that he had been so terrified by a sea which had burst in upon the lower deck, that he had died of fear. Others thought that he had perished of hunger; for, ever since the first storm, the passengers of the lower deck had been no longer able to prepare their food, all their kitchen utensils having been washed away.

"The captain told me that he intended to bury the child himself, because the poor little deceased was a Protestant; but that, if it had been a Catholic, I should have been charged with the fulfilment of that duty. He caused a bell to be rung, upon which all the passengers came on deck. I shall never forget the scene I then witnessed. It was ten o'clock in the morning; the sky was overspread with thick and dark clouds, through which the sun shot a kind of yellowish light; we were still threatened by the waves, which were covered with foam. When all was ready, a port-hole was opened, and a beam, painted black, six feet long and three broad, was hung out over the deep. The body of the child, wrapped in a winding-sheet, was placed upon it, with a large stone attached to the feet. The deep silence was broken for a minute or two by the captain, who read some prayer. The father shed a few tears; the mother, strange to say, seemed quite un-

moved. At a word spoken by the captain, the beam was raised in the air, and the next instant the light corpse glanced upon the waters! The passengers withdrew, apparently untouched by the scene, and some even smiled. How deadening to the human heart is a godless life!

"That day was an anxious one again. It was dark at four o'clock. The same unfavourable signs appeared in the horizon; at five the waves rose with such fury, that a lady who occupied the adjoining cabin came with her sister and daughter and begged permission to join in our prayers. We joyfully accepted the proposal. From that day forward these good Creoles have continued to come and join in our devotional exercises. Jammed, bruised, and knocked against one another, we began to pray, in expectation that God would soon call us to Himself. We had no means of estimating the danger of the ship otherwise than by a small window, which, when the sea was calm, was fourteen or fifteen feet above the surface, but which was now constantly plunged beneath the waves, and deluged us with water. I had stuffed a woollen blanket into the opening, to close it; but it was thrust back by the violence of the waves. The storm seemed to increase in violence, and we began once more our devotion of the Way of the Cross, thinking that we should not live to finish it. How happy are those who are able to pray!

"Towards two o'clock we completed our holy exercise, in which, for the third time, we offered up in will the sacrifice of our lives. Nevertheless I felt great confidence in my heart; for we had just vowed a mass to Saint Anne of Auray, and a memorial in her chapel, that should be a lasting monument to the faithful both of our danger and of our gratitude. Yet the storm seemed to be still increasing, and my sisters were desirous of making other vows. This, however, I forbade, telling them that we ought to stay calmly by the Cross of Jesus, and with peace await the termination of our agony. Poor Sister Cecilia had great difficulty in re-

signing herself to death by drowning, which seemed to her the most horrible kind of death. Her sufferings were indeed great in the apprehension of it. I recommended them to take some rest; and so fatigued were they, that I readily obtained their consent.

"For some minutes there was a complete silence, when suddenly it was broken by an extraordinary noise, as of a crash caused by a complete disjoining of the whole vessel. The ship had, in fact, been thrown upon her beam-ends, and was now under water. The keel was above the surface, and the tops of the masts below it. The billows were rushing in through every opening. In a minute our little cot was well nigh deluged; the sea found its way into the hold, the lower deck, the cabins, and indeed every where. Some passengers on the lower deck burst their prison, and went half-dressed to the captain, to oblige him to accommodate them with a sort of boat, in which the cow was kept. Others, fiercer than American savages, drew their cutlasses for the purpose of cutting their throats, in order to escape the horrors of a more tedious death. The cries, the confusion, the fright, the terror that prevailed that moment, are beyond all conception. We had all of us been thrown to the ground by the shock, and kept pressing ourselves close to one another, that we might die together. Our prayer was, O Jesus! O Mary! O Saint Anne! have pity on us!

"And they heard us. The wind, which blew furiously from the south-west, veered round with the quickness of lightning, as the captain himself expressed it, and blew with the same violence from the north-west; reversed the wave which was engulfing us, and saved the ship. A few minutes more, and it would have been too late. The tempest, however, continued to rage as before; but having just escaped so imminent a danger, we felt no longer afraid. 'The gifts of God,' said we, 'are without repentance;' we therefore spent the following days in making acts of thanksgiving, though still exposed to the fury of the sea and winds.

A circumstance I am about to relate will show still more clearly that God was watching over our ship in a visible manner.

"On New Year's Day, at six o'clock in the evening, the captain ordered the sails to be reefed. They began with the largest, but the wind caught it inside; the whole crew, consisting of twelve men, got upon the yard, but all to no purpose. Two hours after, the same yard, when disburdened of its human load, which might naturally have been expected to break it had it been in any way damaged, fell of itself in two pieces, one on each side of the main-mast, where they hung like the sleeves of the cloak on the back of one of our good Brothers of Christian Instruction. If the yard had been broken at the time when the crew were upon it, they must all have perished.

"The damaged condition of our vessel hindered the captain from taking the route of Bahama, where we should have been exposed to the currents from the Bay of Mexico. We sailed before the wind, therefore, towards the Antilles, in the direction of St. Domingo. On the first of January, which was the thirty-fourth day of our voyage, we had still 2,200 miles to traverse. Our provisions were getting frightfully low; but God, who watched over us, sent a small vessel in our direction on the following day. It was thought that they might have provisions to spare; and on being signalled by the captain, it came up with us, and we bought some maize, biscuit, and salt-fish. The next day we crossed the Line with the usual ceremonies. The heat was stifling, and the awnings that were spread over us were very ineffectual screens from the burning rays of the sun. Such a temperature, in the month of January, spoke but too plainly how far we were away from our beloved France. At last, on the fourteenth, we saw land; it was the island of St. Domingo, with its high forest-clad shores; we were a day and a half in passing it. We saw no inhabitants; but a thick smoke, that rose out of a wood, made us fancy that the negroes

must be burning their trees for the purpose of reducing the land which they occupied to cultivation. You are aware that after the massacre of the whites, the negroes remained masters of that beautiful island; and although their laziness has left a large portion of it still uncleared, they nevertheless gather large crops of pine-apples, citrons, and oranges. On the fifteenth we sailed past the Isle of Tortuga, so called from the number of turtles which frequent it. Shortly after, we passed the large and beautiful island of Cuba.

"The wind continued fair. A calm had succeeded the storm; we were improved in health, and the outward appearance of our ship was changed for the better. I say the outward appearance; for, had our crew been capable of improvement, they certainly ought to have been touched after the signal favours they had witnessed at the hands of Divine Providence; yet, though they all agreed that so imminent a danger had not been escaped within the memory of man, not one of them was grateful for the mercy vouchsafed to them.

"The cabin passengers, although of a more elevated rank in society, rivalled in irreligion those of the lower deck; an atheist, a sceptic, a protestant (afflicted with consumption) and his wife, two young men of the world, utterly without faith, such as are unhappily found in our modern French colleges, a lady of the class called free-thinkers, and the mother of a young person whose conduct was far from edifying. But on the lower deck was the worst kind of rabble you can imagine, and nothing was to be heard among them but quarrelling, drunkenness, fighting, and blaspheming. It was in truth a very antechamber of hell; every kind of vice was to be met with there. I know not how it was that they treated us with any kind of respect: yet, when any of them was ill, the others would stand by in two rows for me to pass, whenever I went to attend him. They chose me also to baptise a newly-born infant; I confess that I felt a lively sense of gratitude for this favour.

"Poor little child, born on the bosom of the heaving billows, and exposed to far different storms from that of the *Nashville*; may it be granted me one day to see thee again in that beautiful heaven, of which I have opened to thee the gate!

"Every evening, at the same hour, when the weather was calm, I used to bless God for all the wonders of His creation. It was my delight to meditate on the providence of God, which is extended even to the smallest fishes. In the Gulf of Mexico are vast numbers of flying-fish, which would become the prey of the large ones, were it not that God, as it were in amends for their exceeding weakness, has given them wings wherewith to escape the voracity of their enemies. 'This, too, is our state,' was my reflection; 'God has given us the wings of prayer, to enable us to escape the snares of the devil.' But although these little fish find safety in the air, they are unable to support themselves in it long, owing to the structure of their wings; and their nature in this respect also is not unlike ours, since they are obliged to live a good deal among their enemies.

"I always regretted leaving the deck; for I think that the whole world presents no more admirable scene than the setting sun of the tropics. It pours forth streams of pure and soft light, colouring the sky and the waves with a thousand tints, each enchanting the eye with its own peculiar beauty. At the moment when the sun touches the waves, he seems to long to cool his heat by bathing himself in the waters of the ocean.

"At nine o'clock in the morning of the twenty-third, we got out of the Gulf of Mexico in a thick fog; but we were espied by a steamer which had come in search of us, for the purpose of guiding us into the Mississippi. The sea seemed already more disturbed, owing to the intermixture of the water from the river; and the mud kept thickening yet more, in proportion as we neared the land. At this spot are seen large fish, particularly dolphins, ever playful and active, and several kinds of water-fowl, but especially pelicans, that bird which is

above all others the emblem of charity. On approaching the mouth of the Mississippi, a great quantity of dead wood is met with, that has been borne down by the course of the stream a distance more than three thousand miles. The whole strength of the sea is exerted to force back the foreign substances that thus enter upon its bosom; and from this contest of the mighty river with the ocean is produced a kind of floating island, formed of earth, leaves, dead trees, and other similar materials. Additions are made every year to the creations of the year before. Upon this land, brought thither by the Mississippi and rejected by the ocean, may be seen a few pilots' cabins. Why do these men select for their home this foggy place, with its heavy, unwholesome atmosphere? They are there merely to gain a few pieces of money; yet we who are religious could complain of having to live in a forest, in order to win souls to Jesus Christ!

"At length we had cast anchor, and the perils of the sea were over. I cannot express to you the emotions which at that moment agitated our grateful hearts.

"The fog had dispersed, and we were lost in admiration of one of the fairest scenes in the world. That vast sea which we were on the point of quitting; the sea of another kind on which we were about to enter; that forest of ships from all parts of the world, either preparing to cope with distant storms, or coming like ourselves to repose after their voyage;—all this presented a most magnificent spectacle. Here I saw again the ship *Cincinnati*, which had first carried us to a foreign land; the sight of it gave me the same feeling of pleasure that one feels at the sight of an old friend in whose company we have undergone adventures and sufferings.

"However, we left this innocent recreation, to go and soothe the sorrows of the Protestant consumptive patient. We had done our best in his behalf during the whole voyage; but now, as it drew to a close, his cough had so greatly increased as to make his danger persep-

tible to every one but himself and his unfortunate companion, whom he was about to leave alone in the world with an infant yet unborn! Fearing that the sudden death of her husband might be fatal to this lady, I ventured to tell her, with all the delicacy that I could, that she must make haste if she had any matters that required settling, for that shortly it would be too late. I then returned to the poor invalid, that I might speak to him of God. Oh, how agitated was his soul! How he promised that, when he felt better in health, he would serve God! Truly he had not a bad heart; but he was both a son and a son-in-law of Protestant ministers, and this restrained him from embracing the Catholic faith, though he had admitted that it was the only true one. Poor man! he died the next night in my arms; all the others, even his wife, had abandoned him. How devoid of consolation, how frightful was this death! The words died away upon my lips in speaking to him of his Saviour. Nor could I bid him hope in Mary's intercession; he had blasphemed her name but a few days before. When I had closed his eyes, I repaired to his widow. With what words could I console her? how speak to her of the future? with what hopes could I soothe her? I gave her my own little cell, and we watched by her during the two days that we continued on board; and on reaching New Orleans we placed her under the care of a friend.

"After waiting twenty-four hours, the steamer, in company of another ship, came to take us in tow. The aspect of the vast plains before us imparted somewhat of their own sadness to our minds. There was no habitation, no living creature, to be seen; nothing, in fact, but some crows. It was like the condition of the earth when Noe came out of the ark. Further on, vegetation flourished with a rich and wild luxuriance; citron and orange-trees, loaded with the finest fruit, were interspersed with rose-laurels; and altogether they formed a delightful forest. Herds of roe-deer sported and gambolled on the plains. On the banks of the stream,

too, I saw the most lovely swans; they were dazzlingly white, and much larger than those of Europe, and always went together in pairs. After several years, the ground formed by the rubbish brought by the stream becomes solid enough to be built upon; and the houses which are erected on it by the planters look like miniature castles encircled with splendid gardens. Rice grows perfectly on this crust of earth. Each planter has his own slaves; the huts of these poor negroes bear some resemblance to the cells of the Cenobites of the East; they are made of planks, and are about twelve feet square, with a little garden behind each of them. Some planters own as many as fifteen or twenty families of these slaves, which are the foundation of the wealth of the landed gentry of Louisiana. Nearly all the inhabitants are Catholics; it was easy to detect this from the little cross which guards their humble cemetery. This sign of our salvation made a lively and tender impression upon our minds; and our eyes were moistened with tears of joy while we prayed for these brethren of ours, who slept under its shadow.

“As we approached New Orleans, the habitations became more numerous, and the land better cultivated; and the quantity of rice stacked in the fields gave of itself sufficient evidence of a plentiful harvest. The Bishop, Mgr. Blanc, was so good as to send his Vicar-General to meet us; and on the 27th of January, 1844, we quitted the poor *Nashville*, on board of which we had so largely experienced the Divine protection. We were received by the good Ursuline Sisters, who lavished upon us the most hospitable and affectionate attentions. I need not say with what haste we proceeded to adore our Lord. At His feet we each of us poured forth our thanksgiving for the preservation of our own lives; to which I added also another thanksgiving for the fatherly love with which He had watched over our dear Sisters of the forest during our absence. For we had received a letter from them, assuring us of their welfare. There also we joyfully invoked all the blessings of Heaven on

our dear and generous friends beyond the seas, who, indeed, were so present to my thoughts and affections, that I could have fancied myself actually in the midst of them. For true hearts there is no separating ocean; or rather, God is their ocean, in whom they meet and are united; they love, and lose themselves in Him and in each other.

"This most happy day of joy and gratitude was a Saturday, the day consecrated to Mary; as was also the day of our original arrival at New York. But in this land of exile happiness has no morrow. The very next morning, when I was rejoicing in the act of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, a burning fever obliged me to leave the church and to take to my bed, on which I lay for seven weeks, the object of the tenderest and most affectionate nursing and attention on the part of the good Ursulines. How compassionate, how beautiful, how universal is charity! These true spouses of Jesus Christ regarded me not in the light of a troublesome stranger, but of a suffering sister. I seemed to be still at that dear Ruillé, where, at the commencement of my religious life, my bad state of health so frequently brought my superiors to the infirmary to visit me. Years had passed away since our Mother watched then by my bed-side! But I see that, at all times and in all places, true religious have an inexhaustible fountain of charity in their hearts.

"The Ursulines have a noble house at New Orleans, adorned with two hundred pillars, and pierced with five hundred lights. Nevertheless, great as is the outward splendour of this community, when I think upon the virtues of its inmates, I cannot but reflect that 'all the beauty of the king's daughter is within.'

"Notwithstanding the constant and affectionate attentions of the pious Ursulines, my heart could find no rest away from my own dear sisters of Saint Mary of the Woods. I had been obliged to separate from my good fellow-traveller Sister Cecilia, in order to send her on thither before me with our postulants. I was burn-

ing with desire to join them again myself. In order to try my strength, I took a drive in a carriage, by which means I was enabled to see the city. It did not contain any thing, however, which seemed to me to be very worthy of notice. Each quarter is appropriated to a different European nation, of which the French one is the oldest. I crossed that which is called the American part of the town, for the purpose of seeing the hospital kept by the Sisters of Saint Joseph. This quarter is new and well-built, and the hospital is fine; but still it is very inferior to those which we have in France.

"It commands the town, surrounded, as you know, by the Mississippi, the level of which rises many feet above the ground, and renders the city very unhealthy. The fogs there are continual; and these, added to an extreme heat, occasion the terrible malady called the yellow fever. The most painful sight to me was the selling of slaves. Every day are seen in the streets at certain places negroes and negresses in holiday attire, exposed for this shameful traffic like the meanest animals at our fairs. It made my heart ache to see those poor negroes; and I would willingly have bought them all, that I might have the pleasure of setting them at liberty and teaching them to bless God. But such feelings must be concealed from the Louisianians, for it is a point on which they are very sensitive.

"St. Joseph's Day, which had been fixed for my departure, at length arrived. After having assisted at the Holy Sacrifice, I left New Orleans. When I was on board the steamer, which was at least two hundred feet long, and capable of containing two thousand passengers, I looked around upon the moving panorama which was being exhibited on the finest river in the world. There were ships of all sizes, and of every kind of shape, and suitable for all purposes; I counted thirty steamboats in motion at once; the air was darkened by the clouds of their smoke; the noise of their wheels and paddles surpassed belief; and I fancied I was looking upon the great Tyre of ancient days, with its mor-

chants of every clime, and its commerce with all the isles of the sea. Then I asked myself, What was New Orleans a very few years ago? Nothing but the sea; afterwards a few savage tribes; to-day it is a world in itself. But what will it be to-morrow?

"The land through which the river winds its course is very flat. The Mississippi is exceedingly circuitous in its course; it seems as though it wished to turn back upon itself, and dreaded to lose at once its waters and its name in the depths of the ocean. On its banks is seen, hanging from the trees, a plant of from fifteen to eighteen inches long, of an ash-coloured grey, whose filaments are no thicker than a thread. This species of moss, which is very soft, is dried by the inhabitants, and is the only material which they use for their mattresses.

"We had scarcely passed two days on board the steamboat, when the spring, which we had enjoyed at New Orleans, disappeared. The sweet-smelling fruits and flowers were succeeded by majestic trees still bare of foliage. In proportion as we approached the north, the temperature grew colder, and the features of the landscape more rigid. It was a source of pleasure to me to mark this harshness in the contrasts of nature inseparable from the changes of climate, for they showed me that I was approaching my home. It was with inexpressible joy that on the fifth day I saw once more the soil of Indiana; I could have fallen down and kissed it. It was no longer for me the land of exile; it was the 'portion of my inheritance,' and I shall 'dwell in it all the days of my life.' I invoked the guardian-angels of Indiana, and prayed them to take the souls of these poor people under their protection. Towards midnight we reached Evansville, one of the first cities of the Republic, where the father of one of our novices came to meet me, and to take me to his house; the next day, which was the Feast of the Annunciation, I had the happiness of confessing and communicating.

"Had I not already known that I was in Indiana,

in the diocese of Vincennes, I might have guessed it from the extreme poverty with which I was surrounded. On coming out of the brick church, whose only ornament was bare walls, I was taken by a Catholic lady to the priest's house. He was absent; but we pushed open the door, and entered a room (if room it could be called) about eight or nine feet in width.

"Some English and French books, a wooden chair, and a stove, comprised the whole of the furniture. On the stove was a cast-iron vessel in which the missionary baked his bread, his only article of food, and of this he only partakes once in the day; such is the penitential life that has been led for several years by the Apostle of Evansville; and yet he is happy! He has wrought several conversions among the Protestants: the mother of our young novice, the Catholic lady who conducted me to his house, was one of his converts. His greatest temporal wish is that the interior of his poor church might be a little ornamented; and in this we will do our best to help him. Thanks to our dear brethren in France, we are now almost rich in objects of devotion.

"The next day I took the stage to Vincennes. I was touched by the sight of those magnificent forests, so often traversed by Bishop Br  t   in visiting his flock; but how did my heart beat when I saw by the light of the setting sun the beautiful spire of the Cathedral of Vincennes, surmounted by the Cross. In a few minutes more I saw myself encircled by my dear Missionary Sisters, of whom there are four at Vincennes. With what transports did we embrace one another!

"In worthy emulation of the priest of Evansville, our Sisters had not even a glass or a plate to offer me. A little salt beef was the sum of the delicacies they could set before me; but on the following morning I had the happiness of receiving the Holy Communion from the hands of my own Bishop and Superior. Shortly after, I was at his feet receiving his blessing. My joy would have been complete, had I only been in the company of my dear nuns. So greatly did I long to see

them again, that I immediately took a steamboat, which in twenty-four hours brought me to High-land. At length I reached St. Mary of the Woods, at eight in the evening.

"What can I say more? After a year of separation, of troubles, and of sufferings, I saw them all again. Imagine what were our feelings, when, with emotion too great for utterance, we went to fall on our knees before Him to whom we owed all our happiness; before Jesus, who had so lovingly watched over us, we might pour forth all our hearts. For you, yes, for you, our dear and generous friends, was made our first prayer! In that poor and holy chapel we renewed our promise to associate you with all our hopes for the future. And from that happy day forward, not one has passed in which our prayers have not been offered up to God, that He may shed on you the sweetest illuminations and the most abundant blessings of His Grace."

CHAPTER IV.

"I EXPECTED to have been able to send you these pages several weeks ago; but I have been obliged to leave St. Mary, on a visit to our three other establishments. I now rejoice at this delay, because it enables me to communicate to you some matters relating to religion which I collected in the course of my journeyings.

"The retreat of the clergy was in progress at the time of my arrival at Vincennes. Sunday, the 5th of May, was the day of the general Communion. The missionaries, to the number of twenty-five, vested in their priestly robes, received the Communion from the hands of the Bishop; and so heavenly was their appearance, that they scarcely seemed any longer to belong to this world of misery. After Mass was the truly grand and solemn ceremony of the opening of the synod.

It began with the chant of *Veni Creator*, the *Litany* of the Saints, and a passage from the Gospels; then were read the Decrees of the Council of Trent, and a long profession of faith; then each priest, resting his hand upon the Gospel, swore at the feet of the Bishop that he believed firmly all that had been read, as well as the whole doctrine of the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church. The preacher of the retreat preached an appropriate sermon. Meantime I reflected with admiration upon the wonders effected by the Divine Mercy in this diocese. Ten years before, there was not a single priest in it, and now they were holding a synod! There is a Bishop, a cathedral, and more than thirty churches. How quickly has the grain of mustard-seed grown into a tree!

"On Monday the same ceremonies took place in the cathedral as the day before; and on Tuesday a solemn Mass was celebrated for the deceased missionaries of the diocese. The good priest of Evansville ascended the pulpit to pronounce the funeral oration of those Christian heroes. He was for several years the companion and intimate friend of Bishop Bruté. Would that I could here reproduce to you the eloquent simplicity with which he so touchingly spoke of the virtues of the deceased Bishop! I can but attempt to convey to you a slight outline of his discourse. He began by calling to remembrance his interior and mortified life, when only a simple priest, together with his labours, his zeal, and his humility. He related some of the thousand distinguishing marks of charity by which his missionary life was characterised. One cannot stir a foot in the neighbourhood of the mountain where he dwelt, without finding traces of his goodness and foresight. In one place it is a bridge, in another a little grotto, which presents to the traveller a welcome shelter from the heat, and a memento for the consolation of the pious. He lived himself in a little log hut. Like his friend who made his panegyric, he slept upon the floor, exposed to all the severity of the seasons. He never retired to rest

till after midnight, rose again at three, and employed in the recitation of his Breviary and in meditation the time which elapsed until Mass, which he used to say at six o'clock, at the house of the Sisters of St. Joseph, distant from his own house about two miles, and with a creek to be crossed on the way. Wetted sometimes to the skin, his clothes would freeze upon his body, and almost hinder him from walking. Nevertheless, in this condition he would say Mass, hear confessions, and distribute the Bread of Life to the good religious. After some words of love and consolation, which came so readily from his heart, he left them, and went to devote his brilliant talents to the service of a college near Emmettsburg, that has since become the nursery of the clergy of the United States. Almost all the present Bishops were once the pupils of Bishop Brûté at this place. In his leisure hours the servant of God went to visit the families of his vast mission. Returned to his hut, he devoted the first portion of the night to writing, either to oppose error or to spread the love of religion. How many times has an afflicted soul been the object of the night-watches of this holy priest! Thousands of letters did he write in the hours snatched from his repose; even his recreation was spent in doing good. Quotations always happy, agreeable talents, a wonderfully accurate and extensive memory, made his conversations as instructive as they were interesting. He could not remain idle himself, and he imparted his own activity to his friends also; who, under his influence, did many things at which they were themselves astonished!

"Who can adequately describe the admirable works of Simon Brûté, after he became Bishop? What a diocese was his! A vast country without a church, without priests, still occupied by the Indians from whom it takes its name. In 1834, Bishop Brûté received from Bishop Flaget a priest, M. Lalumière, whom he had just ordained, in whose single person he saw the whole of his clergy. The following year Bi-

shop Braté returned to France with Bishop Flaget, whom he regarded as a father. There, by displaying the zeal of his heart and the vast necessities of his poor diocese, he caused generous emotions to take root and fructify; and several priests and deacons, desirous of sharing in his labours, followed him into a foreign land. A violent storm threatened to swallow them up; he gave them a general absolution that they might not be discouraged; but at the same time he bade them fear nothing; for that it was only a device of the evil one, and that they would not die; and so it was. Contrary to all human expectation, they arrived in safety at New York, and from thence at the scene of their mission. Rich in this happy reinforcement, it would be impossible to say all that the pious Bishop did for the children whom God had given him. The preacher went on to recal him to their memories by saying: 'In this church, in this very sanctuary where you are seated, you have seen him serve your Mass with a humility surpassed only by his piety. Look at this church, so often swept by his own hands. In this spot he would get upon a chair, and himself ring the bell; in that he would cut the wood you needed whereby to keep yourselves warm. Yes, you are they, my dear brethren, you are they to whom he has set the example of the most brotherly affection, together with every other virtue; and so lively is the impression of those virtues in your hearts, that it would but weaken the impression they have left there to attempt to remind you of them.'

"The preacher did but speak the truth. Oh, how agitated were all the clergy who heard him, by the recollection of the father they revered! They might be seen burying their heads in their hands, as if to hide their tears from the eyes of the bystanders. There they were, those dear children of the good Bishop Braté. There was he,—that venerable prelate who had been summoned to replace him in the sacred functions of the apostolate, who was, in fact, his eldest son, the well-beloved of his heart! There was the good M. Corbe,

to whom the Bishop, with the tenderness of a mother's heart, had so many times carried in his pockets bread and little lumps of sugar! There were those who had shared in his privations, his watchings, his toils! But at that moment every body else was forgotten, in the single recollection of the father who had been so good to them.

"Is it not true," said the preacher, "that when he was with us, we did not feel our weariness? Is it not true that nothing was hard to us; that we scarcely knew that we were poor, though really devoid of every necessary of life? Remember those who died before him; with what fervour had he inspired them! The good M. Deseille, who died among the savages; and who, when alone and forsaken, had the courage to celebrate Mass in the little chapel whither he had dragged himself, and then expired in the arms of Jesus! The seraphic Benjamin Petit, devoured with so burning a zeal for the Indians; did he feel the labours which have so soon snatched him away from our love, while at the same time they have gained him a place among the martyrs of charity? And the dear M. Hamion, the last whom we have lost; would he have been so quickly spent, had he not inherited the zealous spirit of his worthy Bishop? He counted his life for loss, so he might but gain souls to Jesus Christ; and he showed, even in the ravings of his delirium, that in that missionary heart of his he retained nothing but God,—God alone. These are the men whose labours we have to continue and perpetuate,—the models we have for our imitation in life and in death!"

"I cannot tell you, gentlemen, how deeply I was affected by that beautiful funeral discourse! How heartily I thanked God for the little share which He had given me in this dear mission, where so many saints have laboured, and shall still labour! No, that share I would not have abandoned, I do not say for a crown—for what are all the treasures of earth to the heart of a religious?—but for all the spiritual consolations to be obtained in the service of God.

"The synod ended with chanting the *Te Deum*, and reading the Decrees of the Council of Baltimore for all the United States, as well as those decrees which had been determined for the diocese of Vincennes in particular. When all was over, each of those good missionaries, renewed in the Spirit of God, prepared to return to his sweet and painful toil.

"Several of them came to me, to beg that I would let them have some Sisters to aid them in their labours. Two, in particular, insisted upon it, who were stationed in the most considerable towns. M. Delaune, a priest of Saint Brieuc, earnestly desired to have some at Madissin, where he is in charge of a daily increasing congregation. 'The people,' he said, 'come to steal away from me my poor Catholic children by giving them books, dresses, and even money; but they pay dearly for these presents. They begin by ruining the understanding, and then they corrupt the heart. Will you not then take pity on so many souls whom the evil one is snatching away from us? Will you not come and wrestle with this wicked ravisher?'

"You may well suppose that I could have wished for nothing better. We would readily have given him some Sisters: but it was essential to strengthen the first foundations of the establishment, and for this we had no means; we were all equally rich. We appealed to his lordship on the subject, who said that he had a strong desire for an establishment at Madissin; but it was absolutely impossible for him to assist us. We were then obliged to separate, postponing our good work to some future day; and ere that came, how many souls will be lost! You will presently see what those expenses are which we are unable to incur.

"The next day I set out on a visit to our Sisters of St. Peter, an establishment formed during my voyage to France. They occupy what was the original mother-house of the Brothers of M. Moreau, in America; it is in the midst of the forest, and consists of a log-house, open to every breeze. The furniture is composed of a

table, surrounded with old benches, two presses, two class-tables, two bedsteads equally sumptuous, a chair made of the bark of a tree, and another of wood: this is the whole of the furniture, with some kitchen utensils. The provisions consisted only of maize-root and salt pork, to which they were afterwards able to add some milk and butter, the Bishop having at a great sacrifice to himself sent them 100 francs, with which to purchase a cow. I gave them some portion of the presents which I had received from our dear friends in France; but I must acknowledge that if I had been here, I should not have had the courage to allow them to pass the winter in such a house. I cannot conceive how the good Brothers of St. Joseph could all have lived there for the space of a year. I think they must have left behind them their spirit of poverty; for when I proposed to my Sisters to quit their old shed, and return with me to St. Mary of the Woods, these poor children pressed me so urgently, and extolled so highly the happiness of their position, and the good which they could do and had done already, that I decided upon leaving them there until the Retreat. Three of the principal persons of the borough also came as a deputation to entreat me not to take away the Sisters. However, if after the month of August we are not rich enough to repair the log-house, and buy a lock, some bed-furniture, &c., I shall order the removal notwithstanding.

"You cannot conceive how heartily we laughed in the evening, when, before we retired to what we called our dormitory, we were obliged to drag our furniture against the door, because it owned neither latch nor lock. I visited the classes; the children are very well disposed, and generally docile. They have all arrived at the age of reason, and a great many of them are upwards of twenty. Oh, what good might not be done with the wretched money, often so madly expended! After encouraging the parents and the children, we gave them a little holiday; and then, in order to give

some recreation to my dear Sisters of St. Peter's, I took them with me to Jasper.

"The beauty of the forests of Indiana in the rich and lovely month of May surpasses all imagination. The rivers, swollen by the rains, flow through immense avenues of verdure, embracing a number of islands, which they seem to carry with them in their course, and which look like floating nosegays. The trees raise their upright stems to the height of upwards of a hundred and twenty feet, and are covered with the most splendid blossoms. The tulip-tree, the magnolia, the dogwood, the catalpa, covered with white flowers, are like so many censers, worthy to be swung before the presence of God under the gigantic naves of those boundless temples. I cannot imagine any thing more charming than that perfumed snow of blossoms, intermingled with the delicate green of those thickly clustering leaves. Wild lianas climb up to the tops of the loftiest oaks, and then fall down in festoons of every shape, only to recommence upon the ground a new life, thence again to soar in other flights. Just cause has this part of the globe to be named *the New World*; for all nature teems here, almost to excess, if one may say so, with youth and life. Man, the last guest invited to behold these marvels, has not yet set the mark of his hand upon it. Animals of every kind are the quiet possessors of the woods. You see there the humming-bird, the cardinal, the blue bird, and a multitude of others; and all of them do not scruple to remain in the immediate neighbourhood of man, whose regal sway, if they recognise it at all, certainly seems to them remarkably gracious and gentle. Even the stag and the roe see you approach them without terror. There is one animal, however, whose confidence we could willingly dispense with, and that is the serpent. Of these there are specimens of all colours and sizes. When we got to Jasper, our Sisters told us that they had killed two very large ones in their class-room.

"The congregation of Jasper is a very fervent one

During the six months that the pastor had been absent at a distance from his mission, the good Germans who composed it were wont to come seven or eight miles to sing hymns in the church. Last Thursday, which was Ascension-day, we saw a whole parish that had walked more than ten miles in procession. They were in double file, the Cross being carried by a youth at the head of them. Arrived at the church, they first assisted at Mass, and then heard two sermons, one in English, the other in German; so that the service was not ended till nearly two o'clock.

"I confess I was much fatigued myself; and I will add, to my shame, that my fervour was put to the blush when I saw those true and sincere Christians begin again their pious procession. The whole body of them, as though they were a parish of musicians, set out on their homeward course, chanting hymns and sacred songs.

"In the evening we observed the fire-flies floating about in such immense masses that they would have darkened the air by day; but now they only served to light it up with their brilliant wings. The heat was stifling during the whole day; and we were very shortly visited by one of those American storms, the spectacle of which is at once so magnificent and so terrific. The clouds lower till they fall within the shade of the woods; suddenly a cloud bursts, and the lightning darts forth a rapid ball of flame. Clouds are heaped over clouds in grand confusion by the force of the wind. From time to time the atmosphere partially clears, and then through the gaps in the clouds appear, as it were, new heavens and tracts of fire. These storms are admirably described by Chateaubriand, and, the phantom-shrieks only excepted, we have witnessed the same scenes. The roaring of the winds, the howling of the wild beasts, the rolling of the thunder, the cracking of buildings, the torrents of waters,—all these sounds, multiplied by the echoes, seem as though they would proclaim to man that nature is in her last agony. Oh, how terrible will be the day of God's justice, when, even

under the reign of His mercy, nay, in the sweet month of May, consecrated to the mild and gentle Mary, we are the daily witnesses of these majestic horrors !

"Yesterday, while writing to you, I was interrupted by one of our Sisters, who rushed into my room, crying, 'Mother, a serpent!' I went out, and saw at the door a serpent ten feet long, which one of our boys was attempting to kill. I felt a sudden impression of horror steal into my heart at the sight of it. But, terrifying as are the serpents, I must add that we have another plague still more disagreeable. I know not if there be some Pharaoh in the country ; but we are overwhelmed, harassed, and almost devoured by the mosquitoes. Whilst writing you this long and often interrupted journal, I have been beating them off right and left, my hands covered with wounds, and my eyes darkened by the thick smoke which we are obliged to make use of as our only means of defence against these 'powers of the air.' I hope all these causes together may procure some indulgence for this poor journal ; which has no other recommendation than its being the expression of a heart which is sincerely devoted to you, and which derives some hope that you may be pleased by the perusal of these details, from the very satisfaction which it feels in communicating them to you.

"I will only add, that our work is yours ; that every day we unite the remembrance of you all to our prayers and labours. Poor as we are, we are only able to plant ; we must ask you to water ; and to God alone be the glory of the increase ! Would you suffer so many plants to wither ? You, who know the meaning of the 'I thirst' from the lips of a dying Jesus, will not refuse them a drop of water !

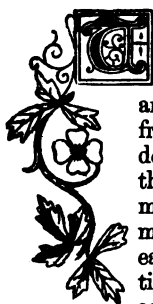
"Please to accept, gentlemen, &c.

SISTER SAINT THEODORE, *Superior.*

"Saint Mary of the Woods, May 28th, 1844."

With this most interesting and beautiful letter we close our notice of the "SISTERS OF VINCENNES."

JEANNE BISCOT.



THE subject of our present sketch was the youngest daughter of a wealthy citizen in the town of Arras, in France, and was born in 1601. Fond of solitude from her early childhood, it was her great delight to retire to a quiet room, and there employ herself in the usual amusement of Catholic children, the dressing of miniature altars and oratories. At the early age of fourteen she made a resolution within herself never to marry; and as an outward mark of her separation from the world and devotion to the service of God, she adopted a plain black dress, which she never afterwards relinquished. Yet Jeanne was by no means deficient in personal attractions. She was of a tall and graceful figure, with good features and a brilliant complexion, whilst the fervour and purity of her soul beamed from her expressive countenance. Her manners were pleasing and animated, and her natural talents of no mean order. Being anxious, however, to detach herself from all earthly motives and vanities, she accustomed herself to think slightly of these natural gifts, and, as far as possible, to hide them from the observation of others. She seldom appeared in society, and could scarcely ever be persuaded to bestow a thought on dress or personal appearance. It is recorded of her, that one day the seamstress, to whom she had given an old cloak of her father's to make up into a petticoat for herself, remonstrated on its unfitness for such a purpose. "What does it matter?" replied Jeanne: "make it up, never

mind how it looks; our clothes are only intended to cover us."

The province of Artois, in which Arras was situated, was being desolated at this time by the war that was raging between France and Spain; yet, in spite of the irregularities and disorders which inevitably spread over a province under such circumstances, there were many young maidens of noble and wealthy families in the town of Arras whose lives were a bright and shining light in the midst of the surrounding darkness. Some were conspicuous for their generous charity, and unwearied ministrations to the poor and sick; others again, abandoning all earthly consolations and pleasures, consecrated themselves to the service of God in the retirement of their own homes or of the cloister. To imitate these examples was the great ambition of the humble-hearted Jeanne; and although, as was abundantly proved by her after-life, the path of active charity was that in which it was the will of God she should serve Him, yet so earnest was she in her desire to leave all earthly things for His sake, that her own attraction was towards a life of perfect solitude. Her mother was now dead, and she herself was at the head of her father's house; nevertheless, she formed the resolution of retiring to one of those solitary cells which, during the middle ages, were so often occupied by pious recluses, whether men or women. Two devout religious, whom she consulted before taking the final step, were so strenuous in opposing it, assuring her that it was not in this way she was called upon to serve and suffer for God, that, submitting herself at once to their decision, she renounced her cherished scheme, and determined to wait patiently until some other way of devoting herself to the service of God should be made known to her.

In laying aside this favourite plan, Jeanne showed, more perfectly perhaps than at any other period of her life, how pure were her motives from all self-seeking, and how sincere was her desire to do the will of God.

She persevered in the faithful discharge of all those numerous active duties which her position in her father's house entailed upon her, throwing into them all the natural zeal and energy of her character; not neglecting any of her spiritual exercises, yet at the same time scrupulously attending even to the most minute details of household affairs.

Jeanne's father was now old, and required much of her care. She was unremitting in her affectionate watchfulness over him; and he manifested his gratitude for her devotion to his interests in the way he knew would be most acceptable to the generous heart of his daughter. Not satisfied with giving her during his lifetime a portion equal to that of her married sister, and countenancing by his approbation and support her numerous works of charity, he formally made over to her, in her thirty-fifth year, the entire management of his property. The ability of Jeanne to do good was now better proportioned to her benevolent will, and she sought on every side for objects who stood in need of her bounty. Unhappily the miseries of war had left but too many such objects around her. Distress in every form appealed to her, and never in vain. Her ingenious mind and ample resources were taxed to the utmost; and what she could not accomplish of herself, she moved others to do by her words of encouragement and entreaty.

The judgment of Jeanne was singularly good, and her opinion in worldly matters, as well as in spiritual, was highly valued. Father Hochette, a Jesuit, himself a very holy man, frequently sent his penitents to her for advice, and used to say that her conversations enlightened and instructed his own mind; for that in listening to her he seemed to listen to the voice of a saint. Hence her circle of acquaintances became very extensive; and the use which she made of this constant intercourse with society was to discover a wider range for her untiring charity. The poor, the sick, the widow, and the orphan, those who were abandoned by their

friends and shunned by strangers through the infectious diseases either of their bodies or of their souls, all alike found in Jeanne a most true and affectionate mother. She especially delighted in ministering to the necessities of those abandoned females from whom even the virtuous too often rigorously shrink. She used to visit these poor women in their houses, carrying with her food and clothing; she nursed them in their sicknesses, and provided for the bringing up of their children with the most tender compassion.

In 1636, numbers of poor German women, the widows and daughters of soldiers, were left by the war destitute beggars in the streets of Arras. Touched with the unhappy condition of these poor creatures, who could not speak a word of French, Jeanne immediately hired a house, in which they were all safely lodged and tended by some of her kind friends familiar with the German language for a period of six months, by which time they were able to earn their own bread in an honest way. The little children too, whose fathers and mothers had fallen victims to the war, and who therefore now wandered helpless and wretched in the streets, attracted her warmest sympathy. After some consideration, she determined on opening a house belonging to her father as an asylum for orphan girls; and this establishment (which was afterwards known by the name of the Holy Family) she put under the care of a most excellent person; her own home-duties depriving her of what would otherwise have been her greatest delight, the task of superintending the children herself. At first there were only seven little girls received; but the number rapidly increased, and by and by something of the same sort was provided for the boys also. Moreover, multitudes of peasants from the neighbouring villages, both young and old, had sought a refuge within the walls of the city. Many of these were starving; some were wounded; others were frost-bitten. Lying about every where on heaps of dirt, loathsome in appearance from the cutaneous diseases with which they

were afflicted, these poor creatures were objects of the deepest compassion. Jeanne opened her benevolent heart to their necessities. First, she went about collecting the children together into one house; when she herself dressed their wounds, fed and comforted them, and provided for their instruction in the duties of their religion. When they had recovered their health, she apprenticed them to various masters, paying all the necessary fees herself. Then, she received a new class of older invalids,—men, requiring still more care; and of these there were so many, that the house would not hold them all, and she accommodated some in a large cellar under her father's house. The children whom she had apprenticed were fed by many kind people in the town, who felt it a high privilege to share in the good work of Jeanne. In the evening, when their work was over, these little fellows would go about to different houses to get their suppers. Then they assembled in one place, to be instructed in Catechism and the Sacraments; and it was the special province of Jeanne herself to provide them with a place to sleep in, and to see after the washing of their clothes. The admirable regularity with which she economised her time enabled her to fulfil all these self-imposed duties, multiplied as they were, without hurry or neglect.

But now a still wider field was opening before her. In 1640 Louis XIII. determined to reconquer Artois from the Spaniards, who still retained possession of the province. With this view, a large army was encamped beneath the walls of Arras. The general who was in command of it came into the town; but the wretched accommodation and scanty rations of the poor soldiers of the line soon brought disease amongst them. Dysentery prevailed to a frightful extent; and every morning, under the walls and in lonely places, were found the corpses of those who had died during the night, without a hand to raise them from the cold earth, or a sympathising voice to pour consolation into their ear. They had neither priest, doctor, nor friend.

This was a case in which there was so much to be done, that even Jeanne Biscot could not undertake it single-handed. Nevertheless, it was her benevolent heart that, touched with their sufferings, devised a most effective plan for their relief; and it was she who took the most active part in carrying it out. She prevailed on her married sister and other pious women to act in concert with her. Dividing the town and neighbourhood into districts, they each undertook the personal care of all the soldiers they should find in their respective quarters. Home-duties and the fear of ostentation kept these charitable ladies within doors during the day; but after assembling for consultation, in the dusk of evening, at the house of Jeanne Biscot, they were to be seen each on her way through the gloomy by-paths of the town, some laden with broth for the sick and hungry, some with linen and salve for the wounded, and others with bundles of straw, to pillow the head of some dying soldier whose only bed was the ground. Often were these heroic women detained till eleven or twelve o'clock at night, unwilling to return so long as any act of mercy yet remained to be performed. However, spite of their efforts, the disease spread rapidly; and with all their courage and zeal, it was impossible for them to do justice to all their patients scattered in so many various places. They therefore hired two houses, to which they caused the weakest and most suffering to be carefully removed; and although there were not beds enough for all, yet at least the shelter was welcome to men who had so long lain exposed to all the inclemency of the weather. A good Jesuit of the town, anxious to assist in this work of charity, contributed something towards furnishing the houses, after which a few pious people followed his example. Jeanne's own resources were exhausted, and she found it necessary to seek for further help; which, however, the citizens, already heavily oppressed by the burden of the war, were not very forward to give. Presently she met with a zealous coadjutor in Father Parmentier,

a Dominican, who undertook to recommend the cause both of the soldiers and of the peasants, in some lectures which he was giving at the parish church. God gave unwonted efficacy to his appeal, and a sum of sixty florins was instantly raised for their benefit. Nor was this the only occasion on which this good father persuaded his hearers to contribute to the failing resources of our generous heroine.

These two houses, however, were soon insufficient for the number of the sick; and Jeanne applied to the municipal authority for the use of a large vacant building in the town. In vain did the selfish many protest against bringing contagion into the very heart of the people; charity prevailed, and Jeanne, going joyously away with the permission she had so painfully wrested from the authorities, devoted herself so vigorously to cleaning and preparing the hospital for her patients, that in a few hours they were safely lodged within its walls. Whilst thus engaged, she was assailed with the most injurious reproaches; but they fell unheeded on her ear, which was only open to the voice of her Divine Master, exclaiming, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Great as were the bodily miseries of these poor soldiers, yet, after all, their most crying necessity was for spiritual consolation; and as most of them were Germans, this want it was not easy to supply; for there were none but French priests in Arras. But even here the ingenious solicitude of Jeanne was not at fault. Any thing rather than that one of the faithful should die unfortified by the rites of the Church! She discovered in the camp a soldier named Paul, who could speak both French and German. She promised to maintain him for life, if he would only serve as an interpreter between the priest and his penitents in the hospital. Being a man of great piety, he gladly undertook the office; and from that time until a German priest was found who could regularly attend his dying country-

men, Paul fulfilled this singular duty with the strictest fidelity; nor would he abandon the hospital even when his services were no longer required, but went about amongst the sick, comforting and exhorting them in their last agony. He afterwards retired to a hermitage, and ended by a happy death a life of much sanctity.

Jeanne and her pious companions would not abandon to others' care the corpses of those whom they had so carefully watched over to the last: they carried them through the streets to the place of burial; one bearing a cross, and others lighted tapers, indifferent to any observations that might be made by the wondering spectators of so singular a procession. And these heroic women continued thus admirably to labour, in the midst of contagion, for a period of *nine months*.

A severer test was still in store to try the charity of Jeanne. The plague broke out in her hospital, and the terrified magistrates ordered the instant removal of every invalid without the walls, to huts hastily prepared for them, far away from every one but their unwearied benefactress and her noble companions. No fear or fatigue came to intercept from these poor victims the charity they so frequently needed. Father de Citey, brother of one of Jeanne's most zealous and faithful friends, undertook to administer spiritual succour; and Jeanne herself visited them incessantly, with every temporal consolation they could receive. And prudently using every needful precaution, God took such good care of her that, an angel of mercy herself to others, she walked unharmed through the midst of the pestilence.

Jeanne's father was now dead, and she lived with her little orphans in the asylum of the Holy Family. When the plague was over, a plan was in agitation among many warm-hearted persons in Arras, for attempting the conversion of the savages of Canada. This scheme had great charms for Jeanne's energetic character, and she arranged all her temporal affairs, with the intention of consecrating the rest of her life and

property to so good a work. But again the religious, of whom she asked counsel, opposed her wish; and again she quietly renounced her own will, and determined to devote herself exclusively to her adopted family. She wished to found a community, amongst whom not only these poor orphans, but others after them, might find a home and means of education for ever; but a feeling of modesty led her to desire that this monument of her generous charity should not be established in her own native place, but at the distant town of Douay. Here again, however, the reality of her humility was proved by the meekness with which she submitted to the wishes of her friend and faithful companion Mdle. de Citey, who was anxious to remain at Arras. At Arras, then, after encountering much discouragement and opposition, Jeanne Biscot founded the Community of St. Agnes, for the protection of young female orphans, in a house which had already been known as the Convent of St. Agnes; obtaining, through the benevolent intervention of St. Vincent of Paul, letters-patent for this purpose from Louis XIV.

Mdle. de Citey was prevented herself from joining her friend in this establishment for nearly a year; but five pious ladies almost immediately gathered round her, and the next step was to fill the house with orphans. The first brought into this sheltering fold was the abandoned child of a soldier, whom Jeanne found in the streets, lying naked on a heap of straw, dying of hunger, and covered with sores. The next was one whom she found deserted in the highway, and who had lost the nails from her feet through exposure to the cold. These were the first of that numerous crowd of orphans who were eventually to find in Jeanne Biscot a mother more tender than any they had lost; and with these two the community began its work on the Eve of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, Dec. 7, 1645. The number soon increased to eighteen; and in the space of forty-five years, not fewer than six hundred and eighty-six orphans had found refuge and instruc-

tion within the walls of St. Agnes, besides an almost equal number of day-pupils, who came from the town and neighbourhood to be taught lace-making, for the benefit of their poor families. The work of the orphans was sold for the good of the community; but, in order to encourage the children, one-tenth of the profits upon each girl's work was laid by for her own benefit, and given to her by the Mother Superior on leaving the house.

The community, which was composed of sisters bound by religious vows, and dedicated to the performance of whatever good work the superior might appoint, received under its fostering care all orphans who were brought to the house, or found wandering by the sisters in the streets. They were instructed, and put in the way of earning their bread. There were no permanent funds for their support; they depended upon alms, chance donations, and their own labour. It was sometimes even necessary to send the little girls to beg from charitable people in the town; but this was only resorted to in cases of extreme distress, and the sisters preferred going themselves once a year to solicit alms in Paris. Here they met with powerful friends; and the famous Duchess de Montespan, amongst others, was most liberal in her charity, besides obtaining for them from the king himself a princely donation.

Thus, in process of time they were able to increase the accommodation for their poor *protégées*, and the house of St. Agnes flourished abundantly. The good Jeanne was not, however, without her trials, and they were such as would have shaken a faith less constant than her own. The inhabitants of the immediate neighbourhood clamoured against her for bringing, as they said, infectious diseases to their very doors; and taking courage from the unpretending character of the infant community, they stirred up the mind of the parish priest to believe her guilty of teaching unsound doctrine to the children under her care. This was too grave a charge not to demand a thorough investigation;

and a canon from the cathedral was sent to visit the house of St. Agnes, to inquire into the plan of education pursued there. The consequence was, as might have been expected, that, while her accusers met only with reproof and shame, Jeanne was warmly encouraged to persevere; and that which had been intended to crush the undertaking became a fruitful source of honour and prosperity. Thus does God turn ever the malice of the wicked to the profit of His faithful servants.

In order to be able to devote herself more unreservedly to the work of drawing up a code of rules for the permanent guidance of the community, Jeanne persuaded her friend, Mademoiselle de Citey, to undertake the practical management of the house, although she herself still remained the Mother Superior. Being of a naturally quiet and retiring disposition, this lady would gladly have declined such a responsible office; but devotion to the will of God prevailed; and Jeanne, under the authority of illustrious prelates, and having first prepared herself by a retreat and earnest prayer, perfected a rule of life for her community, which has since been proved, by long experience, to be full of wisdom and prudence. A detailed account of the rules would be out of place here; suffice it to say, that the one great object of the institute was the spiritual and temporal well-being of poor orphans. None, therefore, were admitted to take the perpetual vows of the community, until by three years of preparatory trial they had thoroughly tested their fitness for the work. They were then employed in teaching the children dress-making, or in whatever other acts of charity the Superior might appoint. It was provided that the children should be well instructed in their religious duties; and no efforts were spared to render them worthy members of society, when they should be capable of earning their bread in the world.

We have mentioned before, that it had been a favourite idea with our heroine to establish a house at

Douay. This wish she still cherished ; although, in deference to the opinion of her friends, she had consented to remain for a while in Arras. But since, whenever it was spoken of in the House of St. Agnes, the sisters unanimously opposed such a project, it was not till 1660 that Jeanne saw her way to its accomplishment. In that year she fell into a dangerous illness, during which her mind was so harassed by the fear of having neglected to fulfil the will of God in this matter, that on her recovery she resolved, in spite of all opposition, to go to Douay at once. She declared her intention to the sisters, at the same time asking their consent in so touchingly humble a manner, that not one dissentient voice was raised, though many tears were shed at the prospect of losing so good a mother. Leave having been thus obtained, Jeanne sent two of the sisters to learn if the inhabitants of Douay were well-disposed towards her plan, with instructions to hire a small house for a year. When this was done, she herself, with one companion and two little orphans, set forth on foot to found another of those noble institutions to which her life was now consecrated. But before all was in order, she had to make many journeys between Arras and Douay. She performed them all on foot, in mid-winter, through miserable roads, and at a time of life when increasing infirmities pressed heavily upon her. No sooner had she arrived at her journey's end, than she devoted herself at once to business ; so that it was often late in the afternoon when she broke her fast. "All for God, my child, all for God," she would say to her younger and stronger companion, who would remonstrate with her for such superhuman efforts. Day after day it was the same ; until one obstacle after another was overcome, and her undertaking was happily accomplished.

Spite and petty jealousy pursued her even at Douay. There was already a school in the town bearing the name of St. Agnes ; and those who were at the head of it, fearing their prosperity would be in some way inter-

fered with by this second establishment, prejudiced the minds of many against it. There was also an orphanage in the place, under the management of a mistress; and the mayor offered this house to Jeanne. Of course, therefore, this woman was in a state of violent indignation against the intruder; but when she learnt that Jeanne had declined to supplant her, she came penitently to beg pardon for all the evil words she had spoken.

At length, when all arrangements were completed, Jeanne returned to take a tender farewell of her sisters at Arras. They were inconsolable at the idea of losing her; and it was only by promising to be Mother Superior of both houses, and to visit them frequently, that she could at all reconcile them to the parting. It proved, however, that this was her final leave-taking of Arras; for she lived only four years longer, during which time she was completely absorbed by the duties of her little colony at Douay. The two orphans who had accompanied her to the new house at first, soon found themselves surrounded by numerous companions. And as they were all dressed in the same way, they came to be known in the town as the Children of the Child Jesus; so called, probably, because an image of Him stood over the entrance-door. The sisters themselves, who had the care of them, adopted the name already so dear to Jeanne, of Daughters of the Holy Family.

Jeanne now gave herself up entirely to the care of her orphans. So tenderly did she watch even over their bodily welfare, that one might have thought she was really the earthly mother of them all. Were they sick or in pain? it was she who sat by their bedside both day and night, bathing their fevered brows, coaxing them by caressing words or little presents to take the prescribed medicines, and ingeniously devising means to beguile the irksomeness of confinement. No office of the sick-room was too servile for her hand; and she was most earnest in impressing upon all the sisters the same compassionate tenderness in their relations with the

children. She would say to the infirmarian, "I depend upon you that they shall want for nothing. They are the suffering members of the Child Jesus; think of them as such, and nothing that you can do for them will seem too wearisome. Be patient with them, and very gentle; they have enough to bear, without being harshly treated."

The same spirit regulated every detail of her conduct towards them. Their joys and sorrows she made her own; their little wants were anticipated; the sickly were nourished with the very choicest food; and when one was removed by death, the good mother wept as bitterly over the little corpse as if it had been a child of her own bosom. Happy were the little ones who found a home amongst the Children of the Child Jesus! When first brought into the house, having been found deserted in the streets, they were often almost naked, and covered with dirt and vermin. Yet Jeanne, looking reverently upon them, as upon the poor of Christ, took them affectionately by the hand, kissed and embraced them all, ragged as they were, as a mother would welcome back a child she had lost. "Come, little one," she would say, "will you be a daughter of the Infant Jesus and St. Agnes? if so, come with me, my child;" and leading them into the house, she washed and clothed them herself. Then, taking them into the chapel to give God thanks before the altar, she showed them their future place in the school, and confided them with very special instructions to the sister under whose charge they were to begin their new life. "Ah, with what reverence of heart and hand should we minister to these children," would she often say to the sisters, "did we but look only on the image of Jesus beneath these disfigured faces and ragged garments!" And she showed by her whole conduct that this heavenly consideration was always present to her own heart.

In vain did persons of standing and consideration in the town beg her to admit their children for a liberal pension to the school. She maintained that her insti-

tution was exclusively for the much-abandoned, friendless, and destitute; and although her inflexibility on this point gave great offence to some, she resolutely persevered in what she believed to be the will of God in this matter.

When the children were old enough to be placed out in the world, Jeanne was unremitting in her anxiety to secure them a safe and religious home; nor would she part with them until she was thoroughly satisfied on this subject. Thus she would keep a giddy, troublesome girl far beyond the usual time, even when some of the sisters would have gladly parted with her, rather than expose her, without sufficient guardianship, to the dangers of a garrisoned town. Nay, she would have preferred their living and dying altogether in the house, to the least misgiving as to their future safety. On one occasion, hearing that a poor girl had taken a place where her spiritual interests were greatly endangered, she wept in the greatest distress, immediately sent a sister to bring her back again, welcomed her with the most unaffected joy, thanking God for His goodness in granting her this blessing, and finally kept the girl four years longer in the house, rather than risk her eternal welfare a second time.

The same benevolent charity which filled the heart of Jeanne towards her orphans, was exhibited also towards the sisters who were under her direction. She watched assiduously over their welfare, provided for their being supplied with every thing that the fatigues of teaching rendered necessary to their health and comfort; and when they were sick, nursed them with her own motherly care. "Let them have all they want," she would say; "what we possess is given to us to make use of; and when we want more, we will sell or pawn our goods, even to our very chalice; and I will thus praise God." Her confidence in the providence of God was most extraordinary, and He never permitted her to suffer want. She kept no accounts either of money received or expended. A plain wooden

bowl, called the plate of the Child Jesus, was her only cash-box. There she deposited all the money as it came in, and thence she took out the necessary funds for daily expenditure; and the bowl was never exhausted.

Much might be said of the spiritual guardianship which Jeanne exercised over her sisters; but the subject is a wide one, and scarcely falls within the compass of our present purpose. We need only say, that her angelic charity was even more entirely enlisted for the souls than for the bodies of those intrusted to her care; and in a degree proportioned to the importance of the interests at stake, did she watch and labour without ceasing. Her discourses on the love of God and our neighbour were full of the sweetest unction; frequently she was quite overpowered by her subject; whilst the sisters who had heard her, partaking in her emotions, earnestly assured her that they were ready to devote themselves with her to whatever deed of mercy God might be pleased to appoint them. Then Jeanne would kneel down and embrace them all, holding them to her heart, and saying, "Come then, my poor sisters, who shall separate us? we are but one heart in all these bodies."

Animated by this spirit, it was with the greatest alacrity that the Daughters of the Holy Family applied themselves to a painful and laborious work of charity which was brought before them in the year 1654. The Prince of Condé was then laying siege to the town of Arras, with a large body of Spaniards; but being warmly repulsed by the celebrated Turenne, at the head of the French troops, he was compelled to raise the siege and to retire, after a great slaughter of his men. The French army remained in the neighbourhood during the summer months; and numbers of the soldiers being sick or wounded, the monks of the Abbey of Avesnes threw open their monastery as a hospital for the accommodation of the unfortunate men. It was impossible, however, to receive them all; and numbers still lay,

helpless and destitute of every comfort, in the open fields.

The position of a French soldier in those days was very different from what it is now, especially in all matters appertaining to sickness. These unhappy men, being attacked by dysentery, were a prey to the greatest misery; having neither proper food, medicine, nor attendance of any kind. When Jeanne Biscot heard from the Superior of the monastery the lamentable fate of these poor sufferers, and that many died without the Sacraments, because he alone was unable to attend to all, she was touched to the very soul by the sad recital; and every faculty of her generous spirit was instantly taxed for their relief. Sending for one of her nephews, whom she had brought up from infancy, and who was now a zealous priest, she represented to him so forcibly the necessities of the case, that he willingly repaired to the monastery, to assist Father Com  , the confessor, in his duties. She also prevailed on a wealthy and skilful surgeon to give his time gratuitously to their service.

Finally, resolving that no effort should be wanting on her part, she set off with several of the sisters to Avesnes, absolutely laden with bundles of linen, ointment, bread, meat, fruit, &c. &c. Who can describe the consolation of the soldiers on seeing so many blessings showered down at once,—a whole company, as it were, of angels descending to minister amongst them! Through the abbey and its environs the good sisters quickly made their way, carrying huge baskets as they went. In the monastery itself, the gardens, court-yards, and adjoining fields, wherever a sick soldier lay, a messenger of mercy knelt beside him supplying every want. Even during the night, Jeanne hired women to wait upon the patients, under the superintendence of two of the sisters. They laboured in this way night and day, swathing with their own hands the very winding-sheets around the corpses, and carrying them out to the burial-ground. And so numerous were the corpses, that the linen they had provided for this purpose was

soon exhausted, and they were obliged to make use of straw and hay.

One day, in the midst of her labours, a woman came to announce that not less than fifty soldiers lay at the point of death, and without any assistance, on the bank of the river. Jeanne did not lose an instant; but hastily calling a sister, accompanied the woman to the spot to ascertain the real state of the case. The report was only too true; not even a single handful of straw was there to pillow the poor sufferers in their dying agony. This was the first thing which she ordered to be brought; and then, assisted by the nun, the poor woman, and her husband (who were good Christians), she lifted the men upon it. The woman and her husband having undertaken to watch over the sufferers, Jeanne left a sufficient sum of money in their hands to procure all that was necessary; and, strictly enjoining them to call her during the night should any seem likely to die suddenly, she returned to the infirmary.

After this, she went regularly every morning with two sisters, changed the straw for these unfortunate men, and fed and gave them all the attention of a hired nurse. Nor did she forget their immortal souls in her care for their suffering bodies; she went from one to another, exhorting them to patience and the love of God; and surely the words of one whom they saw so untiringly devoted to their service must needs have been efficacious. One Sunday, after Mass, she felt a strong impulse to repeat her visit to these out-door patients; and going from rank to rank, as usual, with a word of comfort for each, she found one speechless; and on taking hold of his hand, she discovered he was dead, and that his body was covered with those purple spots which betray the existence of a plague-like fever. This circumstance filled her with the utmost anxiety; for she both dreaded lest she should carry infection to the house of St. Agnes, and also lest, when the facts were known, she should be hindered by the community from returning to her poor patients in the field. 11

was not till nightfall that she could determine what to do. She resolved, with that perfect confidence in God which characterised her whole life, to return home, just as if nothing had happened; and although she had touched the infectious corpse, God mercifully permitted the house of St. Agnes to escape all danger. Nor did the sisters, who, with a devotion worthy of their generous Superior, washed and mended the linen of the sick with their own hands, suffer any ill consequences; but, on the contrary, the most perfect health prevailed among them during this time of general sickness.

It would seem as though the heart of Jeanne were specially open to the necessities of suffering soldiers; but perhaps this is sufficiently accounted for, by the circumstance that their hardships were a peculiarly prominent feature of the times in which she lived. Arras itself was a garrisoned town; she was therefore a constant eye-witness of their condition; and whenever, as was too often the case, she met in the streets any who looked weak and sickly, she would give them a liberal alms, or take them home to receive a good dinner at the gate of her house. We must not, however, suppose that the soldiers were the only people in the town who shared her bounty. Accompanied by a sister, she was in the habit of going about in the poorest neighbourhoods in quest of aged widows and infirm old men, for whom she delighted to perform the humblest services, if by so doing she could ameliorate the hardships of their lot. And yet all these various and extensive charities were never allowed to interfere in any way with the established order of the house. So admirable was her system, that the community was both well-ordered within, and the neighbouring poor carefully attended to without; and so warmly did her sisters correspond to all her wishes, that they used to return from the most fatiguing exertions amongst the soldiers, only to labour with renewed energy amongst the orphans at home

A few more words on the general character of this most exemplary servant of God, and then we must conclude. Her motto was: Poverty, suffering, and contempt. She used to wish that these words could be engraven throughout the house. "At least," she would say, "let us bear them impressed upon our hearts; they are the three favourite virtues practised by our Blessed Lord."

Her humility was singularly remarkable. A sister, who had lived ten years in her society, declared that she had never heard a single word pass her lips which tended even indirectly to her own praise; that she carefully concealed her virtues, and was accustomed to receive with gratitude advice and instruction, even from those whose true part it would have been to learn from her. The lowest offices of the house were those which she always took by preference. As though forgetting that she was the Mother Superior, she would, in all simplicity, bring up coals or wood, and wash or mend for the little orphans. In truth, this last occupation she considered a very high honour; for it was habitual in her to recognise and reverence the dignity of God's poor. She would help the children to put on their shoes and stockings, kissing their feet, and looking upon them as her "mistresses, and as princesses in the court of Jesus." On the other hand, she would shrink from coming in contact with personages of rank and wealth. "I don't know how to talk to them," she would humbly say, "I am not fit for it;" and on this account she would beg one of the sisters to supply her place on occasion of a visit from any distinguished persons. Going one day to a house with one of her sisters, the latter knocked somewhat loudly at the door. "My sister," said Jeanne, "how bold you are! we must not knock in that way; the poor ought to knock gently at the door." And on another occasion, happening to reach the house of a person of condition at the same moment with another visitor, who thundered confidently at the door, Jeanne modestly drew her companion some paces back,

saying, "They will think it is we who have knocked so loudly, and they will certainly be scandalised."

Her love of poverty was as conspicuous as her humility. She even refused the fortune of a young postulant in 1660, although she was the first who had been wealthy enough to bring any portion with her. In dress, as has been already mentioned, her self-denial was unvarying. The house, and even the chapel, were almost void of ornament; for she said, "God will have more pleasure in seeing us feed and cherish His living members, than in seeing us adorn His material temple. If He desires that this also should be done, He will put it into the hearts of those who can do it better than we. For my part, I will importune no one on the subject. No, my sister, let us be poor, since Jesus loved poverty: it was His dearest virtue upon earth; shall not His faithful servants follow his example?"

"All for God, all for God,"—this was the constant watchword of our heroine; it was in her heart even more unceasingly than on her lips. From the time when she was twelve years old, she was in the habit of devoting many hours of the day and night to prayer and meditation; and as she advanced in years, her devotions became almost continual: however great the fatigues of the preceding day, her sisters always found her first in the oratory in the morning.

The virtue of silence, also, she especially recommended to her sisters, strictly forbidding any news of a secular nature to be brought into the house. "Leave such things," she would say, "to the street-sweepers; let the dead bury their dead." Her deportment was composed and recollected. She walked through the streets with downcast eyes; spoke but little, and always with great modesty and reserve; and mortified her senses with unsparing rigour. She ate but little, and never either meat or soup. Vegetables, a little salad, and cold milk, were her principal diet; and her clear complexion and general good health showed that this temperate fare was what was best suited to her.

Her constitution, however, failed at last, under the continual fatigues of her untiring exertions. She persevered to the very end in her noble devotion to active charity. It was in her sixty-third year, after some lingering infirmities had kept her ailing for a long time, that she at last took to her bed; and after receiving the last Sacraments with great devotion, she said to the sisters who surrounded her, "My sisters, I recommend to you three things; first, to fulfil my instructions, which you already know; secondly, never to fail in your charity towards the poor; and thirdly, to dwell together always in most perfect union. And for all this I pray God to give you His most holy benediction." Being asked where she would wish to be buried, she replied, "What does it matter? somewhere in the parish." But when the sister who had lately been appointed Superior of the house at Arras, told her that they would like to have her with them at Arras, she added, "Wherever you like." These were her last words; and almost in the act of uttering them, she resigned her spotless soul into the hands of her Creator, so peacefully that not even a passing sigh marked its separation from the body. Her sisters, the orphans, and all the poor of the parish, lamented deeply the friend and benefactor they had lost; but in accordance with her own special desire, her mortal remains were committed to the ground without pomp or ostentation in all the simplicity which attended the funerals of some of the poor orphans who had called her mother.

NOTE.

It may be interesting to mention some particulars connected with the subsequent history of the institution founded by Jeanne Biscot. The Community of St. Agnes continued to flourish until the fearful outbreak of the French Revolution. The National Convention of 1792 would willingly have permitted the sisters to pursue their charitable functions, on account of the means of education they provided for deserted children; but Lebon, who was chosen the people's representative in the town, wished to impose upon the sisters the constitutional oath, which they at once refused to take. Every effort was made to shake their resolution, but in vain; they assured him with respectful firmness, that thankfully as they would remain with their beloved charge, they could not do so at the risk of violating their conscience. First by promises of great rewards, and afterwards by furious threats, this despot of the people strove to subject these faithful daughters of the Church to his will. "Nothing," says the superior, "could shake our constancy; neither the loss of temporal possessions, nor a prison, nor the prospect of the scaffold." After six weeks of persecution, during which Lebon's agents came daily with their bribes or threats, the house was taken possession of by the police; and the community, in the midst of a cold winter's day, were forced to leave, one by one, and take refuge as they could amongst relations or friends. Secular women were appointed to take charge of the poor children, and "dined that day," says the superior, "on the broth and bread which we had prepared for our own dinners. But the grief of losing our vocation, and abandoning the poor children committed to us by God, made us inconsolable. Our own position, too, in the midst of a society like that into which we were so suddenly thrown, corrupt and virulent against our holy religion, its ministers, and its faithful children, added to our troubles. Some of our community went to Belgium, and some to Germany." Happily, this dispersion was only temporary. In 1800, M. Watelet, appointed by the consulate mayor of the town, observing with pain how insufficient for the proper guardianship of the children was the guidance of women at once without rule or religion, *sans foi ni loi*, seeing even their temporal interests cruelly neglected, used all his influence with the higher authorities to restore the house of St. Agnes to its rightful owners. Opposed though the spirit of the times then was to every measure of the sort, yet the conviction that none but a community of religious sisters could take care of the poor children at once with charity and disinterestedness, at last forced itself on the minds of all; and M. Watelet, who was an old benefactor of the institution, had the happiness

of recalling the sisters of St Agnes to their home. Napoleon afterwards, by an imperial decree, authorised and confirmed the rules of the institution, as one which conferred a national benefit. At a later period, the charity of Jeanne Biscot survived in the descendant of one of her relations. Compassionating the fate of the orphans, who were often exposed to great dangers on leaving the house of St Agnes, this lady, whose name was Mademoiselle Hazart, founded another institution, to receive them from the age of 17 to 25. Mademoiselle Hazart was ably assisted by the Abbé Lallart de Lebucquière, dean and provost of Arras, who placed a large building at her disposal for the purpose. This she furnished in 1828, and put under the direction of religious sisters from Belgium; she herself undertaking to become responsible for all necessary funds that could not be supplied by the labour of the orphans. Lace-making, the chief employment of the women at Arras, and general needlework, was taught so efficiently in this establishment, that on leaving it the pupils were fit to become waiting or work-women. Mademoiselle Hazart died Sept. 1837, having made a will bequeathing all her property to the institution which she had founded.



ANNE DE MELUN,

PRINCESS OF EPINOY, AND FOUNDESS OF THE RELIGIOUS OF THE
HOSPITAL AT BEAUGÉ.



ANNE DE MELUN was descended from two of the most illustrious families in Flanders. Her father, William de Melun, Prince of Epinoy, was Knight of the Golden Fleece, Grandee of Spain, Hereditary Constable of Flanders, and governor of Mons. Her mother's name was Claire Eugénie of Aremborg, a German princess. Anne was the second of six daughters, and was born in March 1618. She had also five brothers; and the whole of this large family was brought up by the virtuous prince and princess with the strictest regard to their advancement in piety.

The Prince of Epinoy was devoted to the cause of the poor, and unsparing in almsgiving. It was his great ambition that his children should inherit this spirit of liberality towards the necessitous; and with this view, he used to supply them with a certain sum for their own expenditure, of which he afterwards re-

quired an account. If he found in any instance that no part of it had been given in charity, his displeasure was very great, and he would withhold pocket-money from the delinquent for several days. He was also in the habit of sharing with the poor whatsoever food was served at his own table, allowing his children to distribute it according to their deserts. He was so anxious to inspire them with a true love and sympathy for the poor, that it is recorded of his daughter Anne, that she was brought to the font of baptism by two peasants, as godfather and godmother, in order to unite her by the tenderest ties with the dearest members of Christ's Church. Fully did Anne respond to all her parents' wishes. As soon as she could speak, her earliest words were lisping petitions for "money for the poor;" and, while still a mere infant, she showed the utmost compassion for their wants and distresses.

When only six years old, she became a canoness in the Chapter of Mons; and, according to custom, left her father's house for that of an old canoness, who was to instruct her in the duties of her profession. Young as the child was, she seemed strongly conscious of the sacred obligations imposed on all who consecrate themselves to God. No vows bound her, but she passed through a sort of novitiate; and as soon as she had learnt to read, nothing could keep her from joining regularly in the choir at office. She became a little model of piety, docility, and regularity, observing with fidelity the minutest details of the rule, scrupulously attending at catechisms and religious instructions, and delighting especially in listening to passages from the gospels, on which she would meditate even at night, sometimes waking up and repeating them over to her attendant, to fix them better in her mind. Although too young to be admitted to holy Communion, her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was singularly great. She would creep as near as possible to the Sacred Host, when exposed upon the altar, and kneeling down rapt and motionless, remain as long as she was permitted, gazing

ANNE DE MELUN.

upwards with a fixed and ardent look. One day, being surprised in this attitude by one of her companions, she was asked why she, a little girl, ventured so far within the sanctuary forbidden to her sex. "Ah, my sister," replied the little Anne, innocently, "it is because I love so much."

Soon after making her first communion, for which she prepared herself with extreme fervour, she was allowed by her confessor to communicate frequently during the week; and, in proportion to the favours received, her devotion seemed to increase. She used to go "for the love of Jesus" twice every week to perform Matins at the chapel on the ramparts of the town, and allowed no severity of weather to interfere with this exercise. So great was her humility, that she never excused herself when unjustly blamed; and even if her teachers sometimes inadvertently reproached her for the faults of others, she silently bore the burden, esteeming it a privilege to be allowed to suffer for one of her companions. She became very anxious to devote herself entirely to God, and at the age of thirteen resolved never to marry; but she had not yet proved the armour in which she was to array herself against the temptations of the world. The time for this was now at hand. It was not the custom for the canonesses of St. Vantrude to seclude themselves from public assemblies; and when Anne de Melun was old enough to go into society, her naturally lively and pleasure-loving temperament overcame the whispered scruples of her conscience, and seduced her to follow the example of her companions, and taste freely of the gaieties in which they mingled. She was fair and noble-looking, and her lively wit and animated manner were yet more charming than her handsome features and royal bearing. She was speedily drawn so completely into the vortex of pleasure, that her former impressions faded one by one; and her heart appeared immersed in the frivolous amusements of the day, as if it had never known a better or a purer element.

Unfortunately, just at this time, her uncle, the Viscount of Ghent, invited his lovely niece to visit him, intending to adopt her for his daughter. Once with him, every thing was done to ensnare her still more deeply. To see her rich and well-married was his highest ambition, and Anne was in greater danger than before. After presenting her with the Marquisate of Richelieu, he devoted himself to find her a wealthy and illustrious husband. The young nobles thronged around her, emulous of her favour; but although she scrupled not to pursue the dangerous pleasures of the world, some lingering tenderness of conscience made her reject, one by one, all the brilliant offers of marriage she received.

Some time afterwards she went to the court of Isabella, Infanta of Spain and Archduchess of Brussels, and entered into all the spirit of the scenes around her; and on her return to Mons, we find her still fluttering after gaiety, going from the choir of her chapter to the ball or the theatre, and so passionately bent on gratifying her taste for enjoyment, that she could no longer endure to make use of any thing that was not perfumed with sweet scent. One day, being told by a lady of her acquaintance that her complexion was too high, and being recommended to wash her face with some cosmetic, and then hold it for some time near the fire, she was foolish enough to follow the prescription. That same evening, being at a ball, and getting overheated, she suffered so severely from her silly experiment that she fainted. Her conscience smote her for her vanity; and more than thirty years afterwards the remembrance of this folly filled her with bitter regret.

These things are, however, only recorded to show the infirmity of human nature, and the subsequent triumph of Divine grace. This lapse of one who had been almost a saint, laid deeply in her heart that sure foundation of all other virtues, a sincere humility. Better things, however, were now at hand. An uneasiness she could not stifle, began to haunt the young votary of

pleasure even in her gayest moments; and to allay the spirit of unrest, she went to confession. Happily she addressed herself to a wise and prudent priest, who fearlessly showed her the sin she had been guilty of, and opened once more before her shrinking mind the judgments of God, and the terrors declared against those who have their consolations in this life. Unable to tear herself at once from all that was now her only happiness, she was nevertheless won by his courage and fidelity to listen respectfully to his remonstrances. He finally told her to pray to God for grace to perceive the danger she was in, and strength to fly from it when once recognised. She promised this, on condition of being still allowed to frequent assemblies and balls. To this he consented, provided she would do three things—1st, Attend those amusements without any deliberate search for happiness in them; 2d, Consider the pains of purgatory whilst in the midst of worldly dissipations; and 3dly, Reflect on the transitory nature of these enjoyments, of which she must one day render so strict an account.

Anne de Melun religiously complied with these directions; and on her next confession was obliged to own how deeply such reflections had disturbed the sweetness she had been wont to taste in gay society. Yet worldly considerations, and the example of other canonesses, again bore down the slight barrier raised in her heart by the worthy priest, and left her a prey to pleasure as before. Just at this time, however, the terrible warning afforded by the death of one of her own relations, came home with irresistible force to her youthful mind.

A young man, her cousin, given up to all the follies and frivolities of his age and rank, was suddenly taken with a fatal illness. Smitten with horror at the thought of his past life, and considering how immediately he must appear before God to render an account of his actions, he struggled for three days against death with the energy of despair, uttering cries of mental agony

which pierced the hearts of all who heard him. Dreading to die, yet certain he had no hope of life, the anguish of his soul betrayed itself in the most fearful bodily convulsions, whilst he incessantly exclaimed in lamentable tones, "Ah, my friends, pray to God that He may have mercy upon me!" The young canoness came to visit her dying cousin, and the awful impression made by his miserable torments thoroughly roused her to consider her own situation before God. The death of her uncle, the Viscount of Ghent, which happened about the same time, set her free from many temptations that were almost too strong for her age and temperament, and she began to wean herself steadily from the vanities of society. Gradually, but successfully, she persevered; there was now neither compromise nor falling back, and a visit which she paid to the Princess of Aminai, her aunt in the country, gave her an excellent opportunity of conquering her taste for dissipation and idleness. She began to occupy herself strictly, to renounce gay clothing, and give herself entirely to the practice of piety and cultivation of her interior life. She would gladly have retired to a convent; but insuperable difficulties seemed to oppose every attempt she made to do so. However, she engaged a quiet room in the abbey of St. Vantrude, and made a place of refuge for herself, in which she could henceforth flee from the world as assiduously as she had hitherto courted it, meditating and praying a great part of the day and night, sleeping on the boards, and frequently making retreats in some convent.

When, some time after this, it became necessary for her again to visit the court of the Archduchess Isabella remembering but too well the excesses to which vanity had led her in her former visit, and anxious to repair, as far as might be, whatever scandal she had given at that time, she prepared herself by a retreat of ten days, and went forth strengthened by a better defence against temptation and weakness than worldly prudence can supply. She now again enjoyed the privilege of open-

ing her heart to the same excellent confessor who had formerly so faithfully warned her of her danger, and the result of this second visit was highly favourable to her future welfare, and very edifying to all who had an opportunity of seeing the change in her conduct and demeanour.

The way of penance was that which she now voluntarily chose, nor was any mortification too deep for her ready acceptance. She lived on roots and vegetables, rejecting, without ostentation, every delicacy that came before her. Trials of another kind also now became her portion. Her beloved father, falsely accused of some treachery at court, was obliged to escape to France in order to save his life. His wife and eldest daughter accompanied him, and the two elder sons soon followed. Thus Anne, though only eighteen years of age, was left the sole guardian of her three younger sisters; one of whom, however, died soon afterwards. This trial was bitterly severe to Mdle. de Melun, who tenderly loved her parents; but an entire resignation to the will of God succeeded the first transports of her grief, and throwing herself before the crucifix, she was heard to repeat with the deepest emotion, "My God, spare not me, but have mercy on my father and my mother!"

On the disgrace of the Prince of Epinoy, he was deprived of all the offices he held; all his property was confiscated, and even his furniture and money were seized. The whole family would thus have been reduced to penury, had it not been for Mdle. de Melun, who, inheriting a large fortune from her uncle the Viscount of Ghent, was enabled to send ample funds to her banished parents, and support herself and her sisters in a manner becoming their rank. She also contributed all that was wanting to complete the education of her brothers.

The prince died within a year after his unhappy exile, too soon to profit by the dutiful exertions of two of his sons, who had gone to plead his cause at the court of Spain. This untimely death afflicted Anne as

deeply, that a dangerous illness was the consequence, and it was more than a year before she recovered her health. As soon as she was able, however, she recommenced her works of charity and practices of devotion, and soon established at home a society of wealthy young ladies, bound like herself to piety and the service of the poor. They met every week, and consulted over their charitable schemes. Abandoned women were the especial objects of their solicitude; they were sought out and placed in secure asylums, where they might retrieve their lost characters. Hospitals also were visited, and notwithstanding the extreme natural repugnance Mdle. de Melun entertained for every thing unsightly and inodorous, she so far conquered this weakness as to devote herself, beyond all others, to attendance upon the sick, and even to contemplate building a hospital on one of her own estates; a plan however, which, from some cause or other, was never realised.

In 1641, her eldest brother died in the French army; and not having seen her mother now for seven years, she instantly hastened with her two sisters, to console her for this heavy loss, and remained with her, in the convent at Abbeville, for several weeks. Whilst here, she indulged her taste for retirement more fully than was possible at Mons; yet at the same time gave herself diligently to the care of the poor and suffering, visiting the fishermen's cottages, and carrying light and comfort wherever she went.

After returning to Mons, she pursued the same life; when not in the choir as canoness, she was visiting the hospitals, or given in solitude to prayer and meditation. At length, so much sanctity in one of such exalted birth drew every eye on Anne de Melun; and the more she sought to conceal herself, the more was she noticed and followed. The poor came for assistance, sinners for spiritual counsel, the suffering for consolation, and persons of piety for words that might strengthen them more securely in the paths of virtue. Well might she

tremble; remembering the snares of her youth, lest spiritual pride should now become her eternal ruin, she resolved to fly from the temptation, and seclude herself in a cloister. But the interests of her family, so dependent upon her remaining at Mons, withheld her for a time; and it was not till her brothers were reconciled with the king of Spain, and her sisters no longer in need of her protection, that she felt herself at liberty to follow the dictates of her own heart. Ten years had she been struggling between duty and inclination, or rather, for ten years had the line of duty seemed uncertain before her; but now all was clear, and with the full consent of her directors, she turned her attention to the best way of accomplishing the separation from the world which she coveted.

Mdlle. de Melun was thirty-one years of age when she left Mons for Abbeville, where her mother still lived, intending never to return, but carefully concealing her intentions from every one. Her great difficulty lay in the objections which her mother would certainly raise to her embracing a conventual life; and she resolved to spare the princess the pain of knowing that their parting was to be a final one. She had long been suffering from a painful affection of the eyes, and availed herself of this as a pretext for going to Paris, that she might consult a physician. Her brother, now Prince of Epinoy, was therefore sent for from court, that he might accompany her; and preparations were made for their departure with a suitable escort. The princess, her mother, although ignorant of her daughter's real intentions, bitterly felt the parting; but when Anne, after tenderly embracing her, fell at her feet in tears beseeching her blessing, she tried to console her with the assurance that the separation was not to be for long.

This trial over, Mdlle. de Melun lost no time, as soon as they were once on their journey, in acquainting her brother with her project of leaving the world, and living henceforward unknown, in some distant part of

the country. He promised to do his best to further her views, and to remain with her until her future residence was determined on. They went to Paris, where she consulted the doctors, and then sent back her equipage and escort to her mother, with a letter, wherein she unfolded all her views for the future, together with the reasons she had for acting so secretly. But although she fully explained to the princess for how long a time this project had been nourished in her mind, in order that she might know it was no hasty or ill-advised step, her affectionate mother—horror-struck at the thought of losing her daughter so entirely, as she could not fail to do if she carried her project into effect, of burying herself, under some assumed name, in a foreign convent—sent messengers to stop her, before it was too late. But Anne and her brother had already left Paris. It was her wish to go to Rome, in order to gain the jubilee of 1650; but the excessive heat of that summer, and the state of the country, on account of the war, obliged her to turn back. The travellers, who had taken the names of *Mdlle. de la Hare*, and *M. de Banuré*, retraced their steps as far as *Saumur*, where, without any particular idea of choosing that place for her future home, Anne went to the Convent of the Visitation, and under her new name, asked to be received. She was admitted as a boarder; but her singular humility, fervour, and piety, with her strict observance of the rule, made every one unite in her own wish, that she should enter as a novice. She would doubtless have done so, had she not been one day recognised, in the Superior's parlour, by a gentleman who had seen her at *Mons*. He immediately revealed her real name and rank; the news was carried to the convent of the same order in Paris, where it reached the Queen, Anne of Austria, who was a frequent visitor.

Now it had long been wished that a convent of the Visitation should be founded in *Flanders*; and the queen, with the double hope of restoring *Mdlle. de Melun* to her family, and gratifying her evident desire for a

conventual life, proposed through the religious, that she should undertake this scheme. Far was such an undertaking from the wishes of the retiring novice; she declined it, as something too great for her capacity, and finding herself now known to every one in Saumur, resolved to leave the place. Accordingly, having consulted a prudent director, who decided that her vocation was to serve the poor, and who recommended her to enter amongst the religious of the hospital at La Flèche, she departed for that spot with her faithful brother Alexander, who would not leave her until her plans were finally settled. Every precaution was taken to conceal their route; and on reaching the hospital, Mdlle. de Melun, robed in the coarsest garments, presented herself as Mdlle. de la Hare for reception. Every thing about the place pleased her extremely; and hoping she had now found a secure retreat, she began her year of probation with most edifying fervour. The change of air and diet, however, with the hard work she had to do, soon brought on an illness, which proved serious. It was evident the air of La Flèche disagreed with her; but this alone would not have induced her to leave a place where she found herself at last unknown, had not other circumstances opened the way. About three leagues from La Flèche, in the little town of Beaugé, dwelt one of those worthy souls whose unworldly zeal seems to effect all things independent of worldly means. Martha de la Beauce, poor and friendless, had undertaken to build a hospital at Beaugé; and had begged alms so earnestly, that already much of the work had been accomplished. Want of funds, however, had now arrested her hand for a time, when, coming to visit the hospital of La Flèche, she was seen by Mdlle. de Melun. Struck by the admirable confidence in God displayed by Martha, Mdlle. de Melun felt the strongest wish to help forward this good work; and with the full consent of her director, after her careful brother had visited the place and reported most favourably of what had been already done, she set out

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with him for Beaugé, where, after putting their own noble hands to the work, they had the happiness of seeing the hospital ready in three months to receive a community.

In November 1650 three or four sisters from La Flèche came to Mdle. de Melun at Beaugé. She had prepared all for their reception, and they began immediately to admit patients to the hospital. Its present limited extent did not, however, satisfy the generous spirit of its second foundress. She bought more land, and enlarged the building; she built wider and loftier wards for the accommodation of the sick, and she added a garden and outbuildings. Falling sick herself, she insisted on being carried into the hospital amidst the other patients, desiring that no distinctions should be shown her. When every thing was completed, she supplied the whole place with necessary furniture. On this foundation alone, Mdle. de Melun must have expended nearly fifty thousand crowns. But in her anxiety to avoid all human praise, she allowed it to be thought that her cousin, as the Prince of Epinoy was supposed to be, had done all this. The time was now come when this generous brother might consider his promise to his sister as fulfilled, and he prepared to return to Paris, after an absence of nearly two years. This separation cost her much grief; for Alexander was both devout himself, and always ready to promote devotion in others, by example, and in every other way. His last words to his sister contained a strict charge not to take the habit of the religious of the hospital, but to keep herself free from external vows. There was indeed much in the case of Anne de Melun to render this advice prudent; and by following it, she was enabled to do much more good than would otherwise have been in her power.

She opened a school in the hospital for poor girls, especially orphans, teaching them herself to read and write. She became the friend of all the poor in the neighbourhood, visiting them when sick in their own

miserable cabins. She established a society of charitable ladies on the model of that in Paris. The suffering, the sorrowful, and the needy thronged around her, and she had help and comfort for all, reconciling enemies, and soothing disturbed minds. In the hospital she made herself the servant of all. Rising before four in the morning, she re-made the fever-tossed beds of the poor patients, dressed their wounds, took her turn in watching beside them, and anxiously superintended the comfort and neatness of every thing around them. Immersed in these humble offices, which nevertheless adorned her with a brighter halo than had ever hovered round her in the assemblies where she had been wont to shine, Mdle. de Melun seemed likely to remain all her life unknown; but again was her name accidentally betrayed through the following circumstance.

In 1652, during the civil war, an inhabitant of Beaugé killed a soldier, to revenge whose death several hundred men encamped before the unfortunate town, threatening to sack and burn it. These men belonged to troops under the command of the Marshal of Hocquincourt, and they had already begun to fire part of the suburbs, when Mdle. de Melun, urged by her director, hastened to the Marshal, secretly divulged her name, and implored his protection for the town of Beaugé. The name of Epinoy claimed his highest consideration; he immediately withdrew his men, leaving the town uninjured, and saluting Mdle. de Melun by a discharge of artillery as they departed. She had the still further satisfaction, during this adventure, of rescuing from amongst the followers of the troops a poor woman disguised as a man, whom she won to repentance for her past follies, and restored to her friends. Although the Marshal kept his promise not to reveal the name of our heroine, some obscure hints which he could not refrain from dropping roused the curiosity of the people in Beaugé, and she was thenceforward watched with so much interest, that on one of her brothers paying her a visit some time after, the

secret soon transpired. When this young man arrived, anxious after a long absence to see his beloved sister, he found her, dressed like a hospital servant, carrying a cup of broth to a patient. He was so charmed by her humility and devotedness, that he insisted on sharing her labours during the period of his stay. But Anne could scarcely forgive him for the mischief he had done in finishing the discovery of her real name. She was now inundated with visits, and involved in all sorts of business, which was referred to her as to an oracle. She felt almost glad when family affairs obliged her to leave Beaugé for a time. Her mother was now dead, as also her elder sister, who had been the faithful companion of the exiled princess, watching over her with exemplary devotion until she herself sunk under complicated suffering, and died a professed nun in the Dominican convent at Abbeville. It must have greatly added to Mdle. de Melun's grief at the loss of her mother, that this princess had shown so much aversion to her way of life, as not even to answer the letters in which Anne had tried to reconcile her; on her death-bed, however, she relented, and sent her blessing to her absent daughter. Soon after this, it was thought necessary that Anne should join her family during the arrangement of the estates and property which they had inherited from their parents; for the confiscated wealth had long since been restored. Accordingly, escorted by three of her brothers, Anne went to Paris, and thence to Picardy and Flanders. She resigned in their favour the Marquisate of Richelbourg, and then gladly returned to Beaugé, where, however, she had scarcely arrived, when the death of her elder brother's wife induced him to entreat her instant presence at Paris. She could refuse nothing to the Prince of Epinoy, who had done so much for her; and intending her stay to be very short, immediately hastened to him. Nevertheless, his entreaties, and her own affectionate compassion for his motherless daughter, induced her to prolong her visit from one week to an-

ether, until two years and a half had elapsed; when, the prince marrying again, the little girl no longer required her aunt's care. It must not be thought that this was a visit of pleasure, or that Mdle. de Melun allowed herself to be for an instant entangled by the world. Though living in the heart of Paris, she still maintained her own conventual rule, which bound her there as stringently as at Beaugé, since she was altogether unfettered by vows, which, indeed, had not yet been taken by any of the community. She rose at four, spent an hour in meditation before Mass, and passed the rest of the day in her own apartments, working for the altar, or in visiting hospitals by way of recreation. She watched over her niece like a mother, keeping her in her own apartments both by day and night.

Soon after Mdle. de Melun's second return to Beaugé, she endowed the hospital with a yearly sum of 8000 livres, added all that was yet wanting to the comfort of the patients, and provided a fund for paying the portions of those poor girls who might only be withheld by poverty from joining the community. Her great wish now was to see the sisters take the vows; and this was happily accomplished in 1671, when eighteen received the veil from the hands of the Bishop of Angers. Mdle. de Melun yearned for the same privilege; but it was denied her by those who were best capable of judging of the peculiarity of her vocation, and for the sake of others she renounced her most cherished wish. An opportunity soon occurred which proved the wisdom of this submission. The hospital at Beaufret was sinking to a mere ruin; its funds were exhausted, and there was no one to look after the patients. Mdle. de Melun, on learning this lamentable state of things, hurried thither with some of the sisters. So deplorable was the condition of affairs, that three of the sisters soon died from over-exertion. Mdle. de Melun persevered, however, undertaking the meanest offices herself. Her heroic devotion inspired others to imitate

her, and more sisters offered themselves for the work. Two ladies of high rank aspired to share in it, one contributing her fortune, the other her personal attendance on the sick. Through the instrumentality of Mdle. de Melun the hospital was rebuilt, and every thing placed once more on a prosperous footing, and she continued to watch over it with affectionate anxiety.

The death of her brother, the Prince of Epinoy, in February 1679, deeply affected her; and from that time her health, always feeble, declined more and more, and she only survived him a few months. But before we speak of her last moments, a few words will not be out of place as to the general characteristics of her life during the twenty-nine years which she spent in the hospital at Beaugé. It was amongst the poor that she was best known; to them she was the patient listener, the most prudent counsellor; and whilst rich people often found her inaccessible, through her fear of distraction, and were always obliged to converse with her in the presence of one of the sisters, a poor person was sure to find her disengaged, and might confidently reckon on a private audience. Crowds of the poor therefore followed her whenever she appeared, riding, as was her custom, on a donkey; and when she was leaving Beaugé for Paris, they threw themselves on their knees in her way, beseeching her with tears to remain amongst them. She was instantly out of the carriage, and in the midst of the troubled petitioners, assuring them with earnestness of her quick return. Once it had been her sole occupation to flatter her own tastes; this same ingenuity was now put in requisition for the poorest and meanest of her fellow-creatures that were brought to the hospital. Forgetful of herself, she spent her time in keeping the sick rooms neat and orderly, after sweeping them with her own hands; burning incense and other perfumes to refresh the heated air, or scattering fresh flowers over the patients' beds to cheer their sight, fatigued with the monotony of walls and curtains; she continually renewed the

bunches of violets and roses which she placed about the rooms, and would bring singing-birds in cages, and hang them up near some long-imprisoned patient, to solace the weary hours of pain and confinement; she had even bonbons and preserved fruits to distribute, and taxed herself to invent new methods of soothing suffering and grief. Was any patient afflicted with some disease more repulsive than usual? it was Mdlle. de Melun, who once could only breathe sweet perfumes, that made herself the nurse; and tenderly and perseveringly she would give herself to the dressing of most horrible wounds, while not a look or gesture betrayed a shadow of repugnance. Once, whilst thus serving a poor patient, whose wound was so disgusting that no one else could bear to touch it, the offensive odour so completely overpowered her weak frame that she fainted three times; yet each time on her recovery she returned heroically to the task, and would not suffer another to take it from her. No irritability on the part of the patient could disturb her equanimity; she only saw in them the suffering members of Jesus Christ. One poor girl, who had been dreadfully burned by gunpowder, so that her whole body was a mass of corruption, was a source of continual trial to all who had to attend upon her; she was especially spiteful against Mdlle. de Melun, once even spitting in her face and attempting to strike her. The humble Anne received all with the greatest meekness, and set herself diligently to win the heart of this perverse creature, loading her with tender and compassionate attentions, until she became patient and gentle, and obtained the grace to make a happy death.

One person, a leper, was received into the hospital, of whom every one else was afraid, on account of the infection she spread around her. Mdlle. de Melun had the poor creature brought into her own anti-chamber, that night and day she might be ready to attend upon her. In vain the danger she incurred from sleeping in an almost adjoining bed was represented to her: she

refused to allow any one else to incur the risk, and yet would not neglect the patient. At last the bishop interfered, and ordered the leper to be placed in a separate lodging. Here, however, Mdle. de Melun persisted in nursing her for a whole year, during which she performed every office required by the miserable creature; herself carrying wood to make a fire, changing the linen saturated from her wounds, and suffering neither cold nor wind nor rain to serve as an excuse for neglecting for one single day the pious duty she had undertaken. Often during the night, filled with anxiety for the condition of her patient, she would rise and go to visit her. God prospered the good work; so that the leper recovered, and was dear as a daughter to her tender nurse.

When she was at the hospital of La Flèche, the poverty of this institution denied the luxury of a fire, to warm the chilly limbs of the poor patients before they were put to bed on their arrival. Mdle. de Melun caused an abundant supply of wood to be brought to the hospital solely for this purpose; and the only recompense she begged was, that a message might be sent to her on the admission of every fresh patient, that she might enjoy the luxury of warming them by the fire she had procured, and of assisting to change their clothes. She, princess as she was, would kneel humbly at their feet, wash and kiss them, and assist them into bed with so much grace and perfect charity, that the poor creatures, unconscious of her rank, would remark admiringly to those around them, "Oh, what a good servant we have in her!" Nothing delighted her more than to be able perfectly to conceal her rank, and to pass for the daughter of a poor man. She was equally careful to avoid the least display of any of her natural talents, often signed herself *Anne l'imbecile* (Anne the fool), and was accustomed to say, "That soul must be unhappy, which cannot comprehend all the blessedness of being constantly and experimentally united to the self-annihilations of Jesus Christ, and to His hidden

life." Her self-control became perfect. No one knew from herself the sufferings she endured, nor the graces with which she was favoured. Her life, says her biographer, was one long death to natural inclination. As it had once been her temptation to adorn her body for the admiration of others, so in her new life no worn-out rags were too shabby for her use. She was often remonstrated with, as being literally unfit to be seen. "Oh," she would reply, "I can never be clad so meanly as was Jesus Christ in the crib and on the cross." She was accustomed to go about in coarse grey garments, often torn, or covered with patches; and if a new dress was bought for her, she would give it away to some poor person, saying with a smile that "it was too fine for her." One day an old servant of the prince her brother, coming with a message to her at the convent, found her sweeping the hall; and not knowing who she was, asked for the abbess. "What is her name?" asked Anne. "The Princess of Epinoy," answered he; when Anne, showing him her broom, said pleasantly, "See, this is the cross of the abbess you are in quest of."

There was nothing idle or self-seeking in all this extraordinary abnegation of Anne de Melun. Her one motive was union with Jesus crucified. An intense devotion to her Lord possessed her now, as in the days of her childhood, when she knelt rapt at the foot of the altar on which was exposed the Blessed Sacrament. And she sought to win all her sisters to the same spirit. She caused paintings, representing the mysteries of our Saviour's life, to be placed in different parts of the garden, where, with the sisters of the hospital, she might go daily during Lent to perform the Stations. But as exposure to the weather soon injured them, she had figures carved in relief substituted, which were her legacy to the sisters, "to keep them in remembrance of the sufferings of Jesus." She was accustomed to spend long hours in prayer before the altar; and was often found, even during the nights of winter, prostrate

on the earth in adoration. She left the church with regret even for the service of the poor, and would say as she went out, "I go out of Thy holy temple, O my God, but not out of Thy presence; I leave my heart here to burn full of love before Thee."

As has been already said, Mdle. de Melun, always delicate, fell in 1678 into a very weak and languishing state. But nothing would induce her to remit a single duty; and hearing that she was wanted at Beaufort, she set out for that place, where she remained two months. The sisters at Beaugé became very anxious for her return; and with difficulty she performed the journey, saying as she embraced them, "My sisters, I am come back to die amongst you." She was more like a skeleton than a living creature at this time, and scarcely able to support herself; nevertheless, she persevered for nearly a year longer in all her usual avocations, attending Mass and prayers and visiting the sick. She frequently expressed a wish to die neither in her chamber nor her bed, but in the choir before our Lady's image, which was especially dear to her, and always ornamented with flowers by her own hand. "I must not lie in bed long ill," she would say, "it will be giving you too much trouble to come and wait on and watch by me; nor must I die here," she would add with a smile, "you would not like sleeping here afterwards." When the sisters, seeing her excessive weakness, begged to be allowed to pass the night near her, she would never consent, lest the trouble should fatigue them too much. "Don't fear, sisters," she would say, "nothing will happen; God will take care of me." One of the sisters proposing to send for a religious in whom she had much confidence, "that he might console her," Anne replied, "My sister, I want no consolation." Patiently to the last she bore her weakness and suffering, ever considerate for the feelings of others; and on the night before her death, hearing that a dear friend had come to see her, she went down to the parlour, saying, "Though death is already on my lips, I could not refrain from

coming to see you." She refused to let the sister remain, who wished to watch by her that night, as she was afflicted with a cancer; and when, anxious about her state, this sister returned at four in the morning, she found Anne de Melun already up, and gone to confession in the chapel. After her confession, the dying woman—for so in truth she was—asked permission to fast during the following day, which was the eve of the Assumption; but her director refused it. He begged her to communicate at the Mass which was then celebrating; but she wished to spend a little more time in preparation; and going into the choir, knelt down before the cherished image of the Blessed Virgin. A slight cough and oppression of the heart compelled her, however, to leave the chapel; and one of the sisters following her, she said, "My sister, I can do no more; my strength fails me." They laid her down on a mattress, in a room near the choir, and all the sisters crowded round her. The last Sacraments were administered whilst she still retained her consciousness, but the power of speech was gone. From time to time she raised her eyes to heaven, as if to make an offering of her departing soul; and after an agony of two hours' duration, that purified soul so peacefully took its flight, that her last breath was not perceived.

After her death, which took place at eight o'clock in the morning of August the 13th, 1679, in the sixty-second year of her age, her countenance resumed more than its youthful beauty. It was difficult to turn away when one had begun to gaze upon it; nor did her limbs stiffen for more than twenty-six hours. Every article of clothing she possessed was divided amongst the people, who eagerly demanded some relic of her whom they had venerated as a saint. There was nothing else left to distribute; for her sole worldly property at the time of her death consisted of a little bed and mattress, a rush chair, a bare table, a crucifix, and two pictures pinned to the wall. It had long been her great anxiety to get rid of every thing she possessed,

that there might be nothing she could call her own ; and it was only out of strict obedience to her director that she had refrained, over and over again, from giving up every source of emolument which was under her control. "No one," she would say, "can penetrate to the depths of my heart, and see how God impels me to renounce all things." All Anjou wept for the illustrious princess, who had made herself the servant of the poor ; for there were none, either rich or poor, who had not something to lose in her ; the poor lost a benefactor, the suffering a comforter, the rich an example of good works, and all Beaugé an object of admiration, reverence, and gratitude. An epitaph was placed over her tomb by the religious of the hospital at Beaugé, of which the following is a translation :—

" Here lies
Anne de Melun,
Spouse and servant of Jesus Christ;
The most worthy daughter of William,
Prince of Epinoy, Knight of the Golden Fleece,
Grandee of Spain,
Hereditary Constable of Flanders,
Viscount of Ghent, &c.,
And of Ernestine Claire Eugénie of Aramburg,
A princess of equally illustrious rank."



IV.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC,

AFTERWARDS

MADEMOISELLE LE GRAS.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC, afterwards Madame, or (as it was the custom in her days to call married women whose husbands were not noble) *Mademoiselle Le Gras*, was of an ancient and honourable family. Her father, Louis de Marillac, was councillor of the parliament of Paris. Her mother, Marguerite le Camus, died almost immediately after the birth of Louise, which took place August 12th, 1591, at Paris.

Monsieur de Marillac devoted himself with particular care to his little daughter; and after she left the convent, where the first principles of piety were deeply implanted in her heart, he took pleasure in teaching her many things which are not generally thought essential branches of female education. She studied Latin and philosophy with great delight, and showed a considerable talent for painting; but she would only gratify this taste on sacred subjects. Some of her paintings are still preserved in her family. Her father was proud and very fond of her, and declared in his last will and testament that she had been his greatest consolation in this world; and that he believed she had been given him by God as a balm to his spirit, amidst all the troubles of life.

Mdlle. de Marillac, from an early age, showed a decided inclination for the conventual life, and would gladly have become a Capuchiness; but her confessor, although himself a religious, discouraged the idea. He seems to have had some intuitive knowledge of the different life that awaited his penitent. Mdlle. de Marillac submitted to his decision; and soon after the death of her father, which happened when she was twenty-two years of age, she married Mons. Antoine Le Gras, Secretary to the Queen, Mary of Medicis, by whom she had one son. During the twelve years of her married life, Mdlle. Le Gras prepared herself unconsciously for her future vocation, by giving the most unremitting attention to the poor of the parish. She nursed them in their sicknesses, doctored them with admirable success, taught and comforted them, prepared them for the Sacraments, and smoothed their dying pillows with unwearied tenderness. She became also a constant visitor at every hospital within reach; and always carried from her own table any delicacy that she thought might tempt the appetite of some poor patient. It was not long before these visits of charity revealed to her so fully the necessities of the poor, that she conceived some vague idea of a sisterhood consecrated to their service; although it was many years before this idea took any definite form.

The pleasures and frivolities of the world had no temptation for Mdlle. Le Gras: she was grave and modest in her dress; never to be met with in any public assembly; and during the time of the carnival, would seclude herself from any even involuntary share in its distractions, by going to the Capuchin convent to make a retreat. Her great aim was to keep herself in uninterrupted communion with God; and her excessive anxiety to preserve her conscience free from stain proved at times so great a hindrance to her advancement in spiritual welfare, that she had recourse to the intercession of St. Francis of Sales. This holy bishop highly esteemed her, and once visited her during a

severe illness. She had the greatest confidence in him, and believed herself indebted to his prayers for the peace of mind which she afterwards enjoyed.

It must not be supposed that Mdlle. Le Gras was so completely absorbed in spiritual, or charitable exercises, as to neglect the duties which her married state imposed upon her. Her husband, sickly and irritable, was the object of her devoted care and unflinching forbearance; and to her only child she was an affectionate and tender mother. So lovely was the spirit of piety which, from her example, pervaded her whole household, that none could dwell within its influence without yielding up their entire hearts. It is even said, that two of her husband's clerks were so wrought upon by the few pious counsels and occasional glimpses of her singular virtue which reached them, that they retired from the world, and gave themselves to lives of seclusion and charity. Her poor valetudinary husband also grew patient and gentle in her soothing presence; and as his state of health became more infirm, his submission to the will of God was perfected, until in December 1625, after receiving the last Sacraments with great devotion, he died.

His widow felt his loss keenly, for they had lived together twelve years in the closest affection; and he had scarcely expired, before she hurried to the tribunal of penance, there to wash away whatever of unchastened human feeling might linger in the pangs of separation, and to prepare for the reception of that Heavenly Spouse to whom she now exclusively vowed herself. She gave herself more than ever to devotional exercises and good works; and became so conspicuous for sanctity, that the Bishop of Belley, her confessor, and a friend of St. Francis of Sales, believing her destined to some high vocation, requested Saint Vincent of Paul to receive her as his penitent. Although scrupulously averse in general to undertake the spiritual guidance of women—noble ladies especially, St. Vincent did not decline the direction of Mdlle. Le Gras; and in a short

time he had fully measured her extraordinary capacity for carrying out the endless schemes of charity which filled his apostolic heart.

He had lately founded his community of Missionary Priests; and Mdlle. Le Gras showing the greatest desire to take some part in the arduous labours of this community, St. Vincent, after sufficiently testing her fitness for the work, sent her in 1629 to visit the charitable confraternities which he had established in different villages. These confraternities were associations of women, who had undertaken to look after the sick poor. The first had been established at Chatillon, in Bresse, in 1617; and had been so successful, that he had gone on founding one after another, until from the villages he had given them to the towns, and now was about to establish one in the parish of St. Saviour in Paris. Esteeming herself highly honoured by this commission, Mdlle. Le Gras set forth in the month of May 1629; having first received from St. Vincent, in writing, the fullest directions for her conduct, which she obeyed with scrupulous fidelity, regarding herself simply as his agent. One or two ladies of piety accompanied her in her journey, which she performed in the readiest vehicle that happened to present itself, without the slightest regard to her own comfort. It was her great ambition to learn by experience the sufferings of the poor, that she might sympathise with them more perfectly; and whatsoever tended to this object, however painful in itself, she welcomed as a gift from God. Rough travelling, hard couches, and sorry fare,—to such things as these she accustomed herself in all these journeys, which she performed regularly during the summers of several years. She carried with her whatever could add to the comfort of the sick and destitute whom she was going to visit, giving them freely at her own expense alms, linen, and medicines. She also defrayed the costs of her own travelling, which, humbly as she journeyed, must yet have been considerable.

On reaching any particular village, she gathered

around her the women of the confraternity, and affectionately exhorted and encouraged them; whatever was amiss she set to rights, and invited others to join the charitable body. Nothing could so animate their zeal, as to see this delicate and high-born lady going herself from cottage to cottage, comforting and relieving the necessitous, teaching the little children their catechism, and nursing the sick with the most devoted attention; dressing their wounds, and waiting on their infirmities with all the tenderness of a near and dear relative. The instructions which she gave to the confraternities, were always excellently proportioned to the understandings of those who belonged to them; but she was capable of enchanting all who heard her by the charms of eloquence, so that ladies used to come in crowds to listen to her addresses; and even men, who were excluded by the rules from being present, hid themselves by stealth somewhere within hearing, and expressed the utmost admiration of them.

It must not be supposed that Mdlle. Le Gras in any way overstepped her province, in the midst of these unusual exertions. So profound was her reverence for the ministers of Christ, that she was never tempted to take a single step which was not fully sanctioned by the priest of the parish which chanced to be the scene of her labours. On one occasion, finding that through some misunderstanding the *curé* objected to her plans, she immediately went to him, and offered altogether to renounce the charitable schemes she had undertaken for his parish if such was his wish. However, on an interview taking place, his scruples, which doubtless were the fruits of some misrepresentation, instantly vanished, and he consented with joy to all that she proposed. Upon this she threw herself so completely heart and soul into the work, that an attack of illness was the consequence. This submission to lawful authority was constantly inculcated by St. Vincent or Paul, to whom she wrote when this perplexity arose. He it was who advised her to act as she did, adding that

"Our Lord would doubtless receive more glory from her humility than from all the good she had intended to do; and that as a beautiful diamond was worth more than a whole mountain of stones, so one act of virtue, acquiescence, and submission, was of greater value than innumerable works of charity."

After spending the chief part of the year 1631 in journeying about the country to establish charitable confraternities, she was invited by Father de Gondi, formerly general of the galleys, to visit his estates for the same purpose; an invitation which, when she had first obtained permission from the Bishop of Chalons, she gladly accepted. Then she began to establish these confraternities in several parishes of the capital, generally at the express invitation of the clergy. But here the want of some modification was felt; and thus was laid the first foundation of that glorious system of charitable supervision of the sick now exercised by the SISTERS OF CHARITY. For in Paris, as soon as a confraternity was founded, numbers of ladies, rich and noble, were anxious to join it. But however heroic their resolutions might be, it was not always possible for them to give themselves up to that devoted care of the sick which was necessary; nor would the purpose have been answered by their sending servants in their stead. To meet this difficulty, it was decided by St. Vincent, that whilst these ladies should continue to give alms, and as much of their time and attention to the poor as they could, it would be expedient to establish a community of sisters, whose sole business should be to devote themselves to the active works of the charity. Numbers of young women from the country instantly offered themselves; and the rich ladies contributing with a liberal hand, the community was soon established, and St. Vincent committed its superintendence to Mdle. Le Gras.

It was on the 29th of November, 1633, that she undertook with willing heart this new function, for which many years of experience amongst different classes anxious to do good had so admirably prepared her. On

March 25, 1634, she determined to consecrate her whole life to it; and it is said that every year she returned fervent thanks to God for having shown her so excellent a way of serving Him in His poor. Mdlla. Le Gras a first received these young women into her own house; but their numbers increased so rapidly that some were soon obliged to lodge elsewhere, and at last she removed with them to La Chapelle, near Paris. She then formed a society of wealthy and noble ladies, who esteemed themselves happy in being allowed to contribute largely to the funds of the new institution. St. Vincent presided over the meetings of these ladies, amongst whom were Madame Goussault (widow of the late president),* Mad. de Pollalion, Mad. Marie Fouquet † of Belleisle, Mad. de Lamoignon, and the Duchess of Aiguillon. But the most energetic of all was ever Mdlla. Le Gras; she was incessantly in the Hôtel Dieu, serving the poor. Even St. Vincent of Paul was obliged to moderate her zeal. "To be for ever at the Hôtel Dieu," he wrote to her, "is not expedient; but to attend there frequently, that is the thing." This, indeed, was their first object, to relieve the wants of the patients in that establishment; but their charities were soon extended to other works, so that it would be impossible to describe all the good which was effected by them.

They sent alms to the most distant provinces, and even provided missions for the heathen. Some of the

* Mad. Goussault deserves to be remembered as the first who proposed, and followed up with untiring energy, in the face of every difficulty and objection, the plan of attending the sick in the Hôtel Dieu. She was a lady remarkable for her love for the poor. Rich and beautiful, the world offered to her in a second marriage every thing that was capable of flattering a young person of her rank. But grace was stronger than nature. Jesus Christ in His suffering poor was the Spouse whom she chose.

† This lady has obtained an immortal name by her great charity, and her perfect submission to the will of God. On hearing of the disgrace of her son, the superintendent of finances, she pronounced at the feet of her Lord these remarkable words: "I thank Thee, O my God! I have begged of Thee the salvation of my son: this is the road to it!"

new community were soon put at their disposal in the different parish confraternities, and under the name of *Servants of the Poor*, began their heroic course. Those who were appointed to labour in the Hôtel Dieu were lodged by the ladies near the hospital; and the greatest improvement in the state of things there may be dated from that time. The patients were now well cared for; and the gentle remonstrances of a *Servant of the Poor* would often win to repentance one who would otherwise have died in hardened guilt. Even Protestants and infidels were won over to the Church that scattered before them such blessed fruits of charity. Of the former alone, more than 700 were converted in this way during the labours of Mdlle. Le Gras. When she went to live in La Chapelle, she devoted much of her time to instructing the poor around her, and teaching the catechism; and availed herself of the size of her new dwelling, to offer hospitality to some poor girls who had fled from the frontiers of Picardy terrified by the war. She fed and lodged them, and took the most anxious care for their spiritual welfare. She also established retreats in her house for those ladies who might wish to retire from Paris for a few days during the year to give their thoughts entirely to spiritual things; and this retreat she always rigidly kept herself.

In 1638, a new and noble work of charity was suggested to St. Vincent by Mdlle. Le Gras, who drew his attention to the unhappy children deserted in the streets of Paris. These poor little creatures were habitually exposed, and even sold in the most pitiless manner, and it was impossible for one so devoted to charity as Mdlle. Le Gras not to feel deeply interested in their condition. In consequence of her representations, St. Vincent entered into the subject with all his heart; assembled the ladies of charity, and committed it to their willing hands. A house was immediately hired near the gate of St. Victor, and about a dozen of these little foundlings were taken in, and confided to the care of Mdlle. Le Gras and her *Sisters of Charity*, as the *Servants of the Poor*

were now beginning to be universally called amongst the people. None could be better fitted for such a charge. Other efforts had been vainly made before to establish some secure asylum for these unfortunate children; but no plan met with full success until the sisters undertook, with the sanction of religion, to do for them without money or price what their own parents shrank from as a disgrace. The numbers of these poor little foundlings were very gradually increased, owing to the limited means of the generous ladies who supported them, until 1640, when the king, by a yearly grant of 12,000 francs, encouraged them to open their doors freely to all.

Again, another work of mercy, which suggested itself first probably to St. Vincent of Paul, who had once been himself sold as a slave into Barbary, but which was gradually taken in hand by Mdlle. Le Gras, is well worthy of notice. This was the charitable care she bestowed upon the convicts, for whom he had procured an asylum near the gate of St. Bernard. All that her own purse and the comforting ministrations of her sisters could do to mitigate the sufferings of these unfortunates, was readily yielded; and some time later, a number of the sisters were regularly appropriated to their service. She also undertook, in concert with other ladies of charity, to provide for numbers of unfortunate refugees from Lorraine, who were driven by the war to seek an asylum in Paris; especially for the young girls, many of whom afterwards became members of her community. Large sums of money were also sent into this province for the relief of the suffering inhabitants.

In 1641, by the advice of St. Vincent, she removed with her community to the Faubourg St. Lazare. Here it was permanently consolidated, and became known as a house of refuge for all the poor of Paris. None were sent away without assistance. Large supplies flowed in from various charitable sources; and when their funds were at any time exhausted, Mdlle. Le Gras, thanks to her boundless faith, trespassed on the resources of the house, or on the fortune of her son, which he gladly

placed at her disposal. Every day also some generous heart, rejoicing in the opportunity of devoting itself to the service of God in His suffering poor, came forward to be numbered amongst the Sisters of Charity. Their community increased so rapidly, that Mdle. Le Gras was able to gratify her own wishes and the loud demands of those around her, by sending detachments of her sisters to all the parishes, prisons, and hospitals of Paris; and not only so, but to distant towns and parishes in the country, and even into foreign parts.

In 1646, at the request of Anne of Austria, whose interest in these servants of the poor was very great, four of the Sisters were sent to Calais, to attend upon the soldiers who were wounded in the siege of Dunkirk. Of these there were between five and six hundred; and so generously did the sisters correspond to the spirit of their order, that two of them very shortly died from the extraordinary fatigue of their incessant labours. No sooner, however, was this made known, than St. Vincent was perfectly besieged by applications from the heroic Sisters, each one anxious to testify her zeal and devotion by undertaking to supply the places of those who had fallen. Anne of Austria contributed liberally towards the support of the foundlings; and when their numbers had outgrown the house which had been taken for them, she assigned to their use the Castle of Bicêtre. By and by, however, the large demands caused by the civil wars upon the incomes and the generosity of the ladies of charity, made them fear they must abandon this great work. They even met together to discuss the necessity of their doing so; but their own hearts pleaded so strongly for the unfortunate children, that a few eloquent words from St. Vincent of Paul, pointing out the good they had done, and the great importance of the object, determined them at all risks to persevere. Mdle. Le Gras, who was present at the meeting, entered most heartily into the resolution to maintain the institution. She both begged and borrowed herself, and also employed the sisters in needlework, and even allowed

them to undertake the making of bread, which they sold to raise funds. All the community, with noble devotion, put themselves on a short allowance of food, reducing it to one meal a day, and that of the coarsest quality. Mdlle. Le Gras, seeing the children one day in danger of suffering from hunger, immediately parted with all the money they had in the house, except two pistoles, to buy flour.

These heroic sacrifices were continued for some time; for in 1650, through the war in Picardy and Champaign, the people of these parts were in grievous distress. Famine, and the rapine of the soldiery, had left numbers of families homeless and destitute. Hundreds lay dying in the roads and fields, breathing their last without the Sacraments, and then decaying unburied on the highways. The priests, hunted from their flocks, sick, dead, or exiles, were unable to assist them. Churches were profaned and pillaged, and the most horrible sacrileges committed. St. Vincent of Paul, filled with sympathy and sorrow, made incredible exertions to supply the necessities of these unhappy provinces. He assembled the Ladies of Charity, and appealed to their liberality so effectually, that although their own fortunes had suffered in these calamitous woes, they undertook to contribute for several years a very considerable sum. The Queen Mother even sold her ear-rings, which were of great price, and all vied with each other in doing their utmost. The result was, that hospitals were prepared for the sick, asylums for destitute young girls, and food, clothes, medicines, seeds and implements of labour for all the inhabitants of the devastated provinces.

Mdlle. Le Gras contributed a more than equal share, by sending a large number of Sisters of Charity, who went amongst the wretched people like ministering angels. She did the same when Etampes was the scene of civil war, and not a few of the Sisters fell victims there to their extraordinary labours. They rescued orphans from destitution and death, they nursed

the sick, they comforted the afflicted. We are told of one, named Sister Mary Joseph, that when dying with over-fatigue, and unable to walk about any longer in quest of objects for her charitable care, she caused them to be brought to her room; and there, sitting upon her bed, she did what she could to relieve the sufferings of the sick and wounded. She died at last, immediately after having bled some sick person that had been brought to her, refusing to the very hour of death to give up the cherished privilege of serving her Lord and Master in His suffering members.

The civil war, after ravaging the provinces, at last broke out in Paris, and lasted for six months. During the whole of this time, Mdle. Le Gras fed daily fourteen thousand persons, sending them broth by the Sisters of Charity, through every quarter of the city. It was at this time also that, at the request of the queen, she sent three of her Sisters into Poland. They were established in Varsovia, then devastated by the plague. Far from shrinking from this severe trial to their courage, on entering their new sphere of action, these heroic women gave themselves calmly and generously to the work. They prepared hospitals for the sufferers, and nursed them with a fidelity worthy of saints. The Queen of Poland was so delighted with what she saw of these Sisters of Charity, that she founded a hospital for orphans, and another for sick servants and wayfarers, which she put under their care.

In 1653, St. Vincent having had a large sum of money placed at his disposal, thought he could not better employ it than in the founding a hospital or house of refuge for old men and women who were past earning their own living. Mdle. Le Gras undertook the government of this hospital; and so admirable were her arrangements, that every one was anxious to see the original plan, which had been only made for forty persons, extended far more widely; and thus resulted, in the end, the general hospital; a noble institution for the maintenance, instruction, and employment of hun-

dreds of poor, both old and young. Lastly, she undertook also the cure of the lunatic hospital, thus embracing, in her universal charity, all the misfortunes to which humanity is subject.

In 1658, the king gave letters patent to authorise the institution of the Sisters of Charity, or, as they called themselves, Servants of the Poor. It had been already acknowledged by letters from Cardinal de Retz, constituted a congregation, and placed under the Archbishop of Paris. M^{lle}. Le Gras, in spite of her wish to retire somewhat from the onerous office she held, was continued as Superior General. In addition to the various public undertakings we have mentioned, it must be borne in mind how much was involved by this office. The care of so many Sisters was no light part of her duty, for she was not one who could superficially discharge an undertaking which interested her heart. Her watchfulness and tenderness towards the sisters was never-failing. Their faults were her sorrow, their virtues her crown of rejoicing. She nursed them when sick, like a loving mother; and her presence was so dear to them, that it was often sufficient to restore strength to some languishing invalid. She wept so tenderly over the loss of any amongst their number, that the greatest precautions were necessary in informing her of a death; but as soon as she knew of it, she would write to all the absent Sisters, and enlist their prayers for the departed.

Our wonder at the gentle yet heroic devotion of the Sisters of Charity almost ceases in reading the words of admonition and encouragement she was in the habit of addressing to them. To follow our Blessed Lord was the high and holy aim she continually kept before herself and them, and this both in life and death. "It is not enough," she writes to her Sisters, "to honour the office of our Saviour on this earth by the employment of your time; you must follow Him even unto death, and show Him that, as you would seek after an imitation of His life by the actions of yours, so you would also learn

from His sufferings and death the way to render yours happy."

But little is recorded of the private life of this most wonderful heroine of charity. Her existence was one long-continued career of active exertion; and the vastness of the plans she undertook, their variety, and the singular success with which she carried them perseveringly to the end, mark her strength, versatility, and heroic charity more worthily than any of those minuter details by which inferior minds might be characterised. But the time was now at hand when her labours were to cease. She had long been struggling against the infirmities of an over-tasked and exhausted frame. So long ago as 1647, St. Vincent of Paul, writing of her to another person, says, "I consider Mdlle. Le Gras as having been naturally dead these ten years; and to see her, one would say that she has just come out of the grave, her body is so fragile and her countenance so pale; but only God knows her strength of spirit. If it were not for her frequent illnesses, and her rigid habit of obedience, she would still go hither and thither visiting the sisters, and sharing in all their toils, though she has now no longer any life in her but that of grace." However, in 1660, she was attacked by her last sickness, and seemed so near death, that she was almost immediately anointed, and received the Holy Viaticum. Her son, who was with her, begged her blessing for himself and all his family. She replied, "I pray the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, by the power which He gives to fathers and mothers to bless their children, that He will give you His benediction, that He will separate you from the world, and unite you to Himself; live like a good Christian." During three weeks she continued in a rather improved state of health; and the community ardently hoped that their prayers for her restoration would be granted; but at the end of this time the fever returned, with a gangrene in her arm, and she again requested to receive the Holy Viaticum, repeating incessantly during the night,

"My Lord, I shall receive you to-morrow!" She then gave her blessing to the assembled Sisters, and exhorted them to persevere in charity. Her own sufferings did not hinder her from thinking of those who were dependent on the house for relief. She desired constant information respecting the poor of the parish, and gave orders for their being assisted. Filled with the true spirit of penitence, she looked upon her pains as a just punishment, and said before all who surrounded her, "It is only reasonable that where sin has abounded, suffering should dwell. God deals justly with me; and in doing justice, He also shows mercy." On being asked by a lady if she was not rejoicing in the thought of going to possess the glory of heaven, she replied, "Ah! that is something inexpressible; but I am not worthy of it." Her greatest trial lay in the absence of St. Vincent, so long her spiritual director. He was just at that time so ill that he could not pay her a visit: so earnestly had she desired to have him near her at the last moment, and now, as if to test her faith and resignation to the uttermost, she was denied this privilege. Nay more, when she sent to beg from him a few words of encouragement written by his own hand, he thought fit not to grant her request, but sent a message instead by a priest of his society, to the effect, that "she was going before, and that he hoped to see her soon in heaven." Perhaps he was almost afraid at this last moment to trust himself to write to one who had been so faithful and so zealous a co-operator in all his own works of charity, lest the fulness of his heart should overflow, and her humility should be endangered in this hour of nature's weakness. Be this as it may, he did not further comply with her request; but Mdlle. Le Gras betrayed not the slightest disappointment. Her submission to the will of God was perfect. Many ladies of rank, with whom her charitable missions had associated her, came to visit her; but none were more sensibly touched by her approaching end than the Duchess of Ventadom, who insisted upon taking up

her abode in the house, that she might render to the dying mother some of those tender cares which she had so frequently lavished upon others.

Nothing could exceed the devotion with which she was nursed by the community; and fearing lest they should be over-taxed, she begged them at six o'clock on the morning of the day of her death to retire, promising they should be summoned to her bed in time to pray for her departing soul. The duchess, however, would not leave her. Mdle. Le Gras, whose days and nights, since her illness began, had been, as it were, one long prayer, now that the awful moment drew near, redoubled in fervour, and repeated from the Holy Scriptures the most touching petitions. "Have pity upon me, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me!" "Look upon me, O Lord, and have pity upon me, because I am alone, and in misery!" Once, in the excitement of fever, she hastily ejaculated, "Take me away from this place;" but recovering herself immediately as the priest held before her the Cross, and gently reminded her that her loving Master had not wished to be separated from it, she replied, "Oh, no, He remained there!" adding, "Let us go, since my Lord is come to seek me." Another moment, yielding to the awful thought of the approaching judgment, she cried out with fear, "O my God, I must appear before my Judge!" but the priest instantly consoled her by repeating the words of the Psalmist: "I have lifted up my soul to Thee, O God; my trust is in Thee;" to which she replied, "May my hope never be confounded." About eleven in the morning she sent for the Sisters, who stood around her during the half hour's agony which preceded her death, repeating the prayers for a departing soul, to which, with her eyes upraised to heaven, she responded in her heart. She then gave once more her blessing to the community, and in a quarter of an hour expired tranquilly, March 15, 1660, aged sixty-eight.

Her remains were exposed for a day and a half, during which time numbers came to enjoy the sad

pleasure of gazing once more on this true mother of the poor. They were then buried without pomp in the church of St. Lawrence, amongst those sisters whose deaths had preceded hers. This was strictly in accordance with her own wishes; for she expressly desired in her last will and testament that it should be so, adding "if any difference is made, it will be the same thing as declaring me unworthy to appear in death as a true Sister of Charity, and servant of the members of Jesus Christ, than which I can conceive no honour to be more glorious."

Some months after her death, St. Vincent of Paul took advantage of a temporary convalescence to visit the Sisters of Charity, and talk with them of the virtues of Mdlle. Le Gras. He even requested each Sister to tell him whatever she had noticed as particularly edifying in the life of their departed mother, and an account of this conference is still preserved. So also are many of the writings of Mdlle. Le Gras, admirable specimens of the interior piety which gave birth to such rare devotion, and inexhaustible charity.

It has been mentioned in our life of Mdlle. Le Gras, that many other ladies were associated with her in her various works of charity. Among these were the Duchess of Aiguillon, Madame de Pollalion, and Mademoiselle de Lamoignon.

MARIE MAGDELEINE DE VIGNEROD, afterwards DUCHESS OF AIGUILLON, was the only daughter of the Marquis de Pontcourlai, and niece of the celebrated Cardinal Richelieu. She was married to the Marquis de Combalet; but after the death of her husband, she resided with her uncle the Cardinal. No historian has recorded the full details of her munificent charities; but it is known that she was the friend of St. Vincent of Paul, and that she found her chief happiness in devoting her immense fortune to carrying out the various schemes of benevo-

ience which that apostle of charity conceived. Her uncle was greatly attached to her; and when he fell into disgrace at court, she also was dismissed from the office which she had held about the person of the queen's mother. An attempt was even made to carry her off to Brussels, where her head would have had to answer for that of the Duke de Montmorency, then on trial at Toulouse. Nine persons concerned in this affair were arrested, and would have suffered capital punishment but for the intercession of their intended victim. Count D'Apchon who was the most responsible party, was sent to the Bastille; but this generous woman could not rest until she had procured his release, and prevailed on his heirs to restore all his confiscated property. Such was her Christian revenge.

In 1638 she was created Duchess of Aiguillon, and four years later, by the death of the Cardinal, inherited a large share of his immense wealth. Abundant means of doing good were now in her power, and she availed herself of them to the very utmost. Those who had been most bitter against the Cardinal and irritated by his aggrandisement must now have derived some consolation in seeing the streams of charity that flowed forth from his coffers.

As if anxious to make reparation for any thing that might have been questionable in the way in which her uncle had acquired his riches, the duchess dispensed them far and wide with an unsparing hand; no application for charity was unheeded, her purse was open to all who wanted, and even tendered to those who shrank from asking.

In common with many other illustrious ladies who were won by the pleadings of St. Vincent of Paul to devote themselves to the service of the poor, she allowed none of his numerous projects ever to fall to the ground for want of funds, or active co-operation. In 1643 she gave fourteen thousand livres for missions to the galley slaves at Marseilles, and the following year established four resident priests at the same place to watch over

these unhappy men. She also founded at Rome, with singular liberality, a house for a congregation of St. Vincent's missionary priests; and letters from the saint are still extant, congratulating her warmly on her share in this good work. She also gave large sums to send missionaries to Ireland, where the faithful were then enduring most cruel persecution at the hands of Cromwell. She had a share also in the missions that were sent to Barbary, and at Algiers she founded an hospital for poor slaves; in fact, there was scarcely a deed of mercy in those days which was not mainly furthered by her instrumentality. She gave fourteen thousand francs to found a Bishopric at Quebec, and to build a Hôtel Dieu in that town; and indeed she is considered the founder of this institution: and she took an active part in every thing else that was done to promote the interests of religion in this infant colony.

Her watchful devotion to St. Vincent of Paul may easily be imagined by all who know how worthy he was of every honour which a grateful heart could render. An incident is recorded in his life which shows at once the humility of the saint and the affectionate zeal of Madame d'Aiguillon. Hearing that he was ill at a distance from Paris, she sent him a carriage which had been bought for his use several years before, by the ladies of the Assembly of Charity convoked by him. This carriage he had always refused to make use of; but when the Duchess sent it, with a coachman and two of her own horses, he availed himself of her kindness to return to Paris, but then immediately sent the equipage back with many thanks. The duchess, however, refused to receive it; and earnestly conjured St. Vincent to continue to use it, since his legs were at this time too much swollen to admit of his walking with ease; but the saint was as resolute as his benefactress, and the contest continued for several weeks, at the end of which time the duchess had enlisted on her side the queen and Archbishop of Paris, who commanded St. Vincent for the future always to ride in his coach;

most reluctantly was he conquered, and he used to call it his *shame* and his *disgrace*, declaring that it was "not meet for the son of a poor peasant to presume to make use of a carriage." The Duchess of Aiguillon died on the 17th of April, 1675.

MADAME DE POLLALION.

MARIE LUMAQUE, afterwards Madame de Pollalion, was born at Paris, Nov. 29, 1599. Her father and mother were of ancient and honourable family, and still more distinguished by their piety and virtue. They had eleven children, of whom Marie was the second. She was remarkable as a child for her tenderness towards the poor; and being placed, from a very early age, under the direction of a Dominican father, the natural benevolence of her heart was soon moulded into the truest charity. She became anxious to deny herself even in the most lawful indulgences; divided her clothes, food, and money with the poor, and showed so singular a discretion in the distribution of her bounty, that, at eight years of age, her father made her his little almoner, an office which she filled to the satisfaction of all concerned. Meeting one day with a poor child who was reduced by grievous ulcers to a state so terrible that no one else liked to have any thing to do with him, Marie implored permission to bring him home; and actually nursed him herself with the tenderest compassion, notwithstanding his loathsome condition, until death put an end to his sufferings. She only went abroad on errands of charity or devotion, renounced the vanities of dress, and was so scrupulous in preserving her conscience unsullied, that it is said her confessor found it difficult to give her absolution.

Notwithstanding her own preference for a religious life, she was married in 1617 to Francis de Pollalion, a gentleman of the king's household. Her married life

was short, but happy; and she had one daughter, who inherited all her mother's virtues. Being left a widow whilst still young and beautiful, she resolved not to marry again; and devoted herself thenceforward to works of mercy, taking the habit of the third order of St. Dominic, which she wore under her usual dress. For a short time, at the request of the Duchess of Orleans, Madame de Pollalion accepted the post of lady of honour and governess to her children; but, although during her residence at court she preserved the strictest possible retirement, a position so necessarily dissipating was not congenial to Madame de Pollalion, and she resigned it.

Had it not been for her daughter, she would certainly have secluded herself in a convent; but for the sake of this child she remained in the world, and had the satisfaction of seeing her grow up a model of Christian piety. After the marriage of M^{lle}. de Pollalion, her exemplary mother gave herself unrestrainedly to the practice of the most noble charity. Women of lost character were those for whom she especially exerted herself; braving danger, insults, and even blows, to rescue unhappy girls who were in perilous circumstances. St. Vincent of Paul was her guide in all these deeds of mercy; and with his assistance she saved forty of these poor women during a very few years, and placed them in the Hospital de la Pitié, providing amply for all their necessities. Having once learned that a poor girl had been enticed from her home by a wicked woman for the worst of purposes, she went courageously to the very house, spoke threateningly to the woman, and, not alarmed by the men who stood by, took the girl by the hand, and conducted her in safety to an asylum. At another time, happening to hear of eight young women who were living together, and pursuing a shameful course of life, she was touched with so ardent a desire to save them, that she actually presented herself as a servant who wished to be hired, having heard that they wanted one. Then, being en

gaged, she declared to them who she was, and spared neither tears nor entreaties to reclaim them from their evil ways. It was impossible not to be moved by the prayers of one who had braved so much in their behalf; they listened to her at first patiently, and then gladly; and after she had visited them constantly for three weeks, she had the unutterable joy of bringing them all to repentance and the most sincere conversion; after which she provided for their future maintenance, some in one place and some in another.

Madame de Pollalion did not altogether confine her charity to this description of misery. She was indefatigable in ministering to all sorts of necessities, and pre-eminent in the zeal with which she seconded Mdlle. Le Gras in her missions amongst the country poor. Disguising herself under the humble dress of a peasant, she went from village to village, carrying medicine, linen, and clothes to the people, and labouring with the most unwearied devotion to instruct the women in their duties as Christians. Always asking the blessing of the parish priest on beginning and ending her work, she was in no danger of trespassing beyond her proper sphere in her ministrations, which were attended with the most abundant fruit.

Her heart, however, was more especially set upon the redemption from sin and misery of those of her own sex who had fallen into evil ways; and it was to this great object that she consecrated the greater part of her life. The liberality with which she had dispensed her property in almsgiving, put difficulties in the way of beginning any very extensive plan. She had given away the greater part of her wealth; her valuable furniture, and even her carriage, she had sold for the benefit of the poor; and most of her estates were mortgaged. Trusting, however, in the providence of God, Madame de Pollalion began the good work she meditated by undertaking the care of a few young girls. Through the liberality of her son-in-law, M. Chatelain, the *Séminaire de la Providence* was founded in 1630. Madame de

Pollalion assembled by degrees as many as twenty Sisters (at first in one of her own houses, and afterwards in a larger house at Charonne bought by the ladies of charity), and placed under their care the poor girls whom she had rescued from destruction. Some of these Sisters were of distinguished family. One, Renée de Grammont de Maçon, a relation of the Duchess Dowager of Lorraine, presented herself for admission dressed as a servant and under the name of Renée Desbordes, being only anxious to serve God without the *éclat* her true title would bring upon her devotion. St. Vincent of Paul was made Superior of the house; and often visited the Sisters, who were called the Daughters of Providence. By associating Madame de Pollalion with the Ladies of Charity, he was also enabled to secure considerable assistance from the wealthy for this growing community; and he even went further, and interested the king, Louis XIII., in its success, obtaining from him letters-patent for its authorisation. After the death of the king, which happened soon afterwards, the queen-regent continued to show great favour to the house. St. Vincent of Paul also obtained permission from the Archbishop of Paris to erect it into a secular community; and finally, discerning in these new Sisters fit elements for his purpose, he formed the plan of a society of pious women, who, consecrating their lives to the service of God and their neighbour, should be ready to go wherever they were sent for religious purposes. Choosing, therefore, seven from amongst the Daughters of Providence, to place at the head of the houses he contemplated, he gave the name of the Christian Union to the congregation, and bound them by an act of association, in 1647, to devote themselves to the salvation of souls. Mdle. de Grammont, or, as she was called, Renée Desbordes, was one of the first chosen. When the civil war broke out in France, the difficulties of the infant community were often great; but, with unfailing confidence in God, Madame de Pollalion persisted in admitting all applicants to her *Séminaire*, more

anxious than before to shelter them from evil. Nor was her trust unfounded. Once, when only one pound of bread remained to feed 180 girls, their mother, undismayed amongst them all, calmly said, "Let us take whatever may be in the box at the chapel door." On opening the box, which usually contained only a few farthings, they found fifty gold crowns. At another time, when the means of providing a dinner for the girls could neither be begged nor borrowed, Madame de Pollalion betrayed some uneasiness at first, considering the numbers depending upon her; but recovering herself in an instant, she exclaimed, "God will provide it; He is our Father," and almost immediately an unknown friend brought a present of 1500 livres. Numberless incidents of the same nature might be cited. But it was not an idle regard to her own repose that made Madame de Pollalion thus cast all care upon God: her own exertions were almost incredible; she went on foot all about Paris from house to house, imploring aid for her children; and after returning late at night, without having taken any food during the day of fatigues, she would hasten before the Blessed Sacrament, there to pour out her secret soul in its difficulties and consolations, and call herself strictly to account for all the day's proceedings, before she tasted nourishment or rest. Her common food was simply a piece of bread, which she would eat as she went about, to save time.

In 1652 she removed her community to a large building, formerly an hospital, in Paris, in the Faubourg St. Marcel. This was the gift of the queen-regent; and the community was, by the archbishop, erected into an hospital, of which Madame de Pollalion was named superior. The institute of the Christian Union was but one with that of the Daughters of Providence, until after the deaths of St. Vincent of Paul and Madame de Pollalion. From the latter was also founded, at Metz and Sedan, houses of the Propagation of the Faith and of the *Nouvelles Catholiques*; a community favoured by the illustrious Turenne, and designed as a secure asylum for

those women who, having been brought up in error, were anxious solemnly to abjure it, and remain in safety from the persecution of enemies and solicitations of friends.

Notwithstanding her incredible exertions, Madame de Pollalion had long been in a state of health which, if any selfish considerations could have overpowered her charity for others, might well have excused her sitting down in self-indulgence for the rest of her days. She had a tumour in her arm for a long time, and afterwards a cancer, from which she suffered excruciating torture, besides other diseases of a lingering and acutely painful nature; but nothing was allowed to interfere with her active devotion to the welfare of others, or even with the austerities which she practised on herself. She was in the habit of watching in prayer and meditation until two in the morning; rising, nevertheless, at five, to join the community in chapel. In 1652 she wrote to St. Vincent of Paul, "In our fear lest thieves should come in the night, because our inclosure is very low; we have thought it better, for the sake of the Blessed Sacrament—our treasure, to have it watched by two of our good girls in turn, by night as well as day. I beg your permission to watch in my turn with them, assuring you that it will not hurt me; because to order things to be done by others in which we ourselves take no part often occasions relaxation of discipline; and besides, you know that, even had I one thousand lives, I ought to give them up, in reparation for all my unworthy communions: I trust you will grant me this favour, and that you will remember before God the wants of your daughters." So much exertion, joined to her austerities and frequent loss of regular meals, brought Madame de Pollalion's maladies to a rather sudden termination. If she would have allowed herself some little recreation, perhaps her life might have been prolonged; but her toil was unceasing, whilst she offered her sufferings to Him for whom she laboured. In 1657, being at Rouen on an expedition to the king, who had

just offered a gift to her community, she felt that her death was approaching; and instantly preparing herself by the Sacraments of the Church, she was removed in a litter to Paris, wishing to die amongst her daughters. On the way, observing a sick man left to the charity of passers by, she insisted on being deprived of some of her own comforts for his relief. On reaching home, she desired to be carried before the Blessed Sacrament; and the illness rapidly increasing, there was only just time to administer Extreme Unction, when at the last anointing she calmly expired, without agony, surrounded by her weeping daughters, on September 4th, 1657, aged fifty-seven years.

Her confessor pronounced her funeral oration in the Church of *la Providence*, where her body remained unburied for many years, covered with a pall. An epitaph worthily commemorating her virtues and charities is now placed over her tomb.

MADEMOISELLE DE LAMOIGNON.

MAGDELEINE DE LAMOIGNON was the daughter of the President of the Parliament of Paris, and was born September 14, 1608. Her mother was said by St. Francis of Sales, her confessor, to be one of the holiest women of her time, and the name of her father has been justly celebrated. The young Magdeleine also enjoyed the privilege of being under the direction of this Saint, to whom she made her first confession at five years old, and at nine was admitted to holy communion. Mdlle. de Lamoignon grew up beautiful and lively, and charmed all who saw her. When old enough to marry, some unexpected obstacle came in the way of her accepting a gentleman who had paid her his addresses; and looking upon this as a most welcome liberation from future bonds of this sort, she devoted herself thenceforward to the service of the poor, adopting the most plain and

simple dress, and renouncing scrupulously every fashionable pleasure.

St. Vincent of Paul's charitable assemblies were then held at her mother's house, which gave Mdlle. de Lamoignon abundant opportunity for satisfying her desire to do good. Whilst her mother at home received the poor into her hotel, fed, and clothed them, she went about Paris with a faithful servant, and penetrating the most obscure alleys and the gloomiest cellars, sought out the hidden cases of distress, and ministered herself at the sick beds of the dying with the humility and charity of an angel. Her home was the constant resort of every creature in distress; their every want was supplied, and every sorrow soothed; and the president and his only son, themselves models of virtue and charity, willingly shared in every sacrifice, which the abundant liberality of Madame de Lamoignon and her daughter often rendered necessary. From living so constantly amongst the poor and suffering, Mdlle. de Lamoignon came to sympathise with them so tenderly, that her whole heart and mind were occupied in forming schemes for their welfare and consolation. So great was her zeal and readiness in carrying out any good work, that St. Vincent of Paul used to say no one could follow her; and in after years, when she was more immediately concerned in executing his own charitable plans, he was accustomed to call her his *right hand*.

When Magdeleine was twenty-eight years of age, her father died and her brother married. This brother always warmly seconded the benevolent wishes of his mother and sister; who, being now set free from domestic duties, gave themselves up so eagerly to the consolation of the distressed, that their own income was often insufficient for the claims that were made upon it. He also did his utmost to watch over the personal comfort of his relatives, fearing they despoiled themselves too unsparingly. As for Mdlle. de Lamoignon, when supplies for her poor people failed, she unhesitatingly set forth to beg for them amongst her friends. Fore-

most in every work of charity, it was she who, by her touching representations, stirred up the ladies of charity to undertake the care of the little foundlings whom we have spoken of before as habitually exposed to the most dreadful evils. She exerted herself so energetically in behalf of the expatriated victims of the war then raging on the frontiers, that preachers advocated their cause from every pulpit, and large sums of money poured in on their behalf; and during the civil war and blockade of Paris, when provisions were frightfully dear, and a general panic restrained the funds even of the most generous, M. de Lamoignon having contrived to bring into the city a quantity of corn sufficient to last his mother and sister for a year, these devoted women, forgetful of themselves, and trusting the future to God, distributed the whole of it in a single day. During this time they fed daily, in Paris, 15,000 persons who had fled for shelter to the capital; besides 800 or 900 young women to whom they had offered an asylum; and they provided a refuge for those religious who had been compelled to leave their convents.

In 1651 Madame de Lamoignon died. Her affectionate daughter retired for six months into the religious house where her sister was a nun; and at the end of this time went to take up her abode with her brother, who afforded her every opportunity for gratifying her insatiable appetite of charity. When money failed, and she could no longer solicit alms in this form from her friends, Mdle. de Lamoignon began to beg clothes, linen, furniture, old jewellery, corn, wine, &c.; and every spare corner of her brother's house was filled with these treasures, which he used to enjoy exhibiting to his acquaintance, telling them his sister was about to open an old clothes' shop. Carrying on the joke, she would then beseech them to patronise her establishment: and many would gladly lend themselves to this pleasantry, leaving in her hands both the money and that which they had pretended to purchase.

It was not merely for the poor, whose pressing ne-

cessities pained her outward eye, that Mdlle. de Lamoignon made all these efforts. She was warmly interested in foreign missions; and seldom did a priest set forth for India, China, or the Levant, without bearing with him some token of her pious sympathy in his necessities. She united with the Duchess of Aiguillon to found the hospital at Quebec. She helped to establish the Nuns of the Visitation at Varsovia in Poland. In concert with St. Vincent of Paul, she redeemed from slavery at Algiers seventy of her countrymen; and how large a share she had in founding the General Hospital for Beggars at Paris will be shown by the following interesting incident. She promised to supply 60,000 crowns; and going to a wealthy but selfish lady, her relation, Madame de Bullion, she painted in such lively colours the distresses she had undertaken to alleviate, that the lady was moved to compassion, and readily promised her assistance. "But how much do you want?" was the next not unnatural question. "I would gladly carry away 60,000 crowns, if you would give them to me," replied the petitioner. "I will take you at your word," said Madame de Bullion; "you shall have 60,000 crowns, if you will carry them away yourself without the knowledge of any one." Mdlle. de Lamoignon accepted the proposal with joy, dismissed her carriage and servants, and immediately began her journeys on foot. Many were the times she had to go and return, furnished under her dress with a leathern belt which held the money; until in the end Madame de Bullion gave, beyond her promise, another 20,000 crowns, which secured the establishment of the hospital. This lady afterwards became most exemplary in her piety, and was won by the example of her young relative to the tenderest compassion for the poor.

On an epidemic breaking out in Paris, the personal devotion of Mdlle. de Lamoignon to the sick was unwearied; she not only nursed them and cared for their children, but supplied the convalescent with the means of resuming their interrupted work. The queen of

Louis XIV. honoured her with especial favour; but it was only for the poor that she availed herself of this privilege. One day the steward of this princess, thinking the calls of Mdlle. de Lamoignon rather too frequent on the purse of his royal mistress, remarked in her presence, that it would be almost better for the queen to abandon to her the revenue of the chief part of her kingdom. "And what says Mdlle. de Lamoignon herself to this?" asked the queen. "That the poor would be the losers, Madame," gracefully replied the lady; "for the revenues of your kingdom are limited, whilst your charity has no bounds." At another time, going to court to solicit pardon for a person condemned to death, and being introduced by the queen to Louis XIV., the king, addressing her with great courtesy, told her that all who came to court must play. "May I venture to propose a condition to your majesty?" said Mdlle. de Lamoignon. "Certainly," replied the king. "It is, Sire, that the winnings may be for the poor." The king consented; and after playing for two hours, Mdlle. de Lamoignon carried away with her a supply of money for her beloved poor, as well as the pardon she had come to solicit. The king chose her afterwards for his almoner, sending her money four times a-year, and refusing to receive any account of its expenditure. During his campaigns in Flanders, he used to write to her, entreating her prayers. When contagious disease, incendiary fires, and tempests, devastated whole provinces, Mdlle. de Lamoignon was instantly ready to help. Collecting weekly 5 or 6,000 francs, she sent them to the most necessitous part of the country; and is said to have saved more than 100,000 persons, who must have perished but for her timely aid. No want was unheeded by her, no distance chilled her glowing charity. Poverty, wherever it existed, had on her the tenderest claim. During a scarcity at Paris, after she had sold her own wardrobe and plate, and exhausted her purse and that of her nearest friends, she then wrote to beg aid from the

Prince and Princess of Conti. They had already given away almost all they possessed in charity; but in answer to this appeal the princess sent her pearl necklace and diamond earrings, which were valued at 50,000 crowns, by express to Mdle. de Lamoignon, charging her to sell them secretly for the benefit of the poor. No where but at court could she hope to dispose of such valuable ornaments; and going thither courageously, she was rewarded by finding that not only the king bought the necklace and diamonds, respecting the secret they involved, but that others, roused by this example, sacrificed their jewels and wealth to the same benevolent purpose. It was reckoned that this year Mdle. de Lamoignon distributed 300,000 francs.

She interested herself warmly for the expatriated English Catholics,—exiles for their faith,—and did her utmost to make their stay in France pleasant to them: she also got Sisters of Charity and priests to visit the Protestant prisoners of war, of whom thirty-five were by this means converted. She visited the officers at Vincennes, and won many of them to a sincere change of life. A knight of Malta having been rescued from slavery by some Armenian merchants, to whom he had promised a ransom, found his family on his return unwilling or unable to fulfil his promise. Mdle. de Lamoignon instantly took up the cause of the injured merchants, and herself paid the ransom.

In a word, she was ready to assist in every good work, and to persevere to the end. In the country, at her brother's estate, she laboured as indefatigably as in Paris, visiting the cottages, teaching the children, nursing the sick. She always addressed the poor as brother or sister, and sought to identify herself with their sufferings as much as possible. Always anxious to promote peace, she would weep and kneel before those who had quarrelled, until she could effect a reconciliation. Lost women were to her compassionate soul objects of peculiar interest; and unwearied were the means she would employ to rescue them from sin, and bring them

by degrees to resume a creditable position in society. Schools were always sure of her warm support. Once during her stay at Barville with her brother she invited Father Bourdaloue, who was there on a visit, to catechise the children and people publicly; and, in order that the older peasants might not be ashamed of being taught their religion, she took her place with the rest, and prevailed on the father to question her in turn with the others. He loved in after times to recal this instance of her humility: but this was a virtue she feared above all others to lose; and so genuine and unaffected was this fear, that on her brother being made first president, congratulations pouring in upon the appointment, Mdle. de Lamoignon, finding her own credit considerably augmented, immediately went into a strict retreat, in order to keep herself humble and detached from worldly things. It was in the true spirit of forgiveness also that she once made herself the nurse of a peasant who had been known to speak very insultingly of her. His illness was long and dangerous; during which, being moved to penitence, he could not sufficiently admire a charity than which, he said, none greater could exist in Paradise.

For the Sisters of Charity Mdle. de Lamoignon always cherished the deepest respect and affection. Some difficulty being thrown in the way of their letters-patent being registered by parliament, she used all her influence to overcome it; and finding that it was principally raised by one particular councillor, she hit upon the happy expedient of inducing him to get the investigation of the matter specially committed to himself. Every one thought all would be lost by this measure; but in point of fact, she gained her end. Having occasion frequently to converse with him, that she might give the information he required, she skilfully managed to bring the matter to the desired issue.

Shortly after this, the death of her brother, when she herself was now grown old and feeble, had a serious effect upon her health. She went into retreat to prepare

herself for death, of which she had always felt an unusual dread; not through love of life, but a fear of being too unworthy to appear before God. This fear, however, left her as the hour of trial drew near. In 1686 she declined rapidly; and passing most of her time in the Convent of the Visitation, Rue St. Jacques, Paris, she continued to the end in the practice of incessant devotion and charity. For not even her own infirmities wearied her of the poor. On their behalf she still maintained a correspondence, which obliged her to employ four secretaries. When urged to rest herself, she would answer, "Leave me my poor; let me live with them till the last! Oh, that I could appear with them before the tribunal of Jesus Christ!" Being prevailed on by her nephew to return to his house, her friends gathered round her there, and amongst them was Madame de Miramion. Father Dubois, a Jesuit, heard her confession, and prepared her for death; and Father Bourdaloue came to encourage her. She joined in the prayers for the dying, and so peacefully expired, April 4, 1687, in her seventy-ninth year; having devoted the whole of her long life to the most unceasing and extraordinary works of charity.



V.

MADAME DE MIRAMION.

MARIE BONNEAU DE RUBELLE, afterwards Madame de Miramion, was born at Paris, November 2, 1629. She was an only daughter; but had four brothers, two of whom were younger than herself. Her mother died when Marie was only nine years old; and this irreparable loss made a salutary and lasting impression on the susceptible heart of the child. Her father, feeling his natural responsibilities deepened by this event, watched over his daughter with peculiar tenderness, superintended her education, and gave her as a teacher and guardian a lady of strict religious principles, whose constant care it was to train her pupil in the ways of virtue and holiness.

The influence of this lady, however, was in some danger of being neutralised by that of an aunt; for shortly after the death of his wife, Monsieur de Rubelle went to live in the same house with his married brother, whose wife naturally adopted the motherless child; but being a gay and worldly-minded woman, tried to dissipate what she thought the melancholy of her niece's mind, by taking her about to theatres and balls. But Marie's mind refused to be brought into harmony with the gay world in which her rank fitted her to move; and though her aunt, wondering at the singular taste which led her to prefer solitude and prayer, or works of charity, to the gayest dance or most brilliant as-

ssembly, persisted in taking her from one amusement to another; yet her young heart never became entangled by the snares so generally and fatally beguiling. She remained faithful to the lessons of her lost mother, and of the admirable governess who had supplied her place, resolutely closed her eyes to the seductions of the stage when present at a play, and in the midst of the ball-room accustomed herself to meditate on death.

It is said that, on one occasion when her aunt gave a dance, and a large company of the young, the noble, and the beautiful were assembled in the saloons, Marie, as fair as any, rich, and universally admired, was waited for in vain to open the ball. After a long search, the young girl, then only twelve years of age, was found beside the bed of a poor dying man-servant in the house; where, deaf to the distant sounds of music and the still more syren voice within that must have whispered her to join the gay assembly as its queen, she watched and soothed the dreadful convulsions of his dying agony with an heroic courage that could only have been inspired by a charity born of God. Nor was this a solitary instance; to tend the sick and minister to the afflicted was an object which she sought with as much earnestness and perseverance, as other young ladies of her age and rank pursue a succession of frivolous amusements.

When about fourteen years old, she accompanied her aunt, who was ailing, to a watering-place; and during her absence her father fell sick, and died before she could return to Paris. This was a severe trial; but it served to develop the unselfish energies of Marie's character. Young as she was, instead of being overwhelmed by the loss of her natural protector, she was chiefly troubled by anxiety on account of her brothers, left orphans younger than herself; and with affectionate zeal she undertook to watch over their education, and to be a little mother to the family.

Before she was sixteen, however, her relations arranged for her a marriage with Monsieur de Miramion,

a gentleman of the family of Beauharnois, and councillor of the parliament of Paris. Although, according to the established order of things, Marie's inclinations were but little consulted in this union, yet her heart appears to have fully sanctioned the consent which she gave; for when, after only six months of wedded life, her husband was suddenly carried off by inflammation of the lungs, she sorrowed for him with an intensity that nearly proved fatal to her, in spite of the habitual submission to the will of God which governed her whole life. Young and devoted to pleasure, Monsieur de Miramion had been at first in some consternation at the rigidly secluded habits of his fair young bride. But learning that a sincere scruple of conscience withheld her from joining in the vain amusements of the fashionable world, and won to the greatest admiration of that charity, which could find in the solace of the poor and suffering a purer pleasure than in the companionship of the gay and the wealthy, he soon entirely conformed himself to her wishes; not only leaving her at liberty to follow her own convictions, but renouncing his own former habits, that he might lead with her a life which might almost be called austere. "We never spoke together of any thing but death," wrote Madame de Miramion. So soon and suddenly as this close union of hearts was to be broken asunder, it was well that they had thus learned to prepare themselves for the separation. M. de Miramion died with all the courage and piety of a Christian; and his widow, although on that sorrowful day only sixteen years old, yet as soon as she had recovered from a dangerous illness brought on by the greatness of the shock, she made a fervent resolution to renounce thenceforward even the innocent enjoyments of this passing world, and to devote herself entirely to God.

Within a few months afterwards she gave birth to a daughter, and lived in the strictest retirement for two years; but in spite of her repeatedly avowed resolution to remain a widow, there were many who, tempted by

her rank and fortune, made most persevering efforts to induce her to break her determination. Her beauty had been somewhat impaired during these two years by an attack of small-pox; nevertheless, her personal appearance was still remarkably prepossessing, as may be conjectured from the following romantic adventure, which befel her about this time, and which for its singularity deserves to be recorded at length.

Bussy de Rabutin, a daring and licentious, but talented man, and cousin to Madame de Sévigné, having seen Madame de Miramion at church, and having heard the report of her great wealth, determined to force her into a marriage with himself. He was said to be really in love with her, if a passion that displayed such brutal violence deserves the name: but in those days the forcible abduction of women, whose fortunes tempted the cupidity of the unscrupulous, was not uncommon; and Count de Bussy was well aware that his character would not recommend his suit to the young widow, if he should seek her hand in the usual way. Although warned that she was in some danger from De Bussy, Madame de Miramion gave no credit to the tale, not thinking that he cared about her in any way. It may be, therefore, that De Bussy, not observing any attempt at precaution or self-defence on the part of Madame de Miramion—in spite of warnings which he may have known her to have received—was sincere in what he states in his own memoirs, namely, that he was firmly persuaded the young widow was privy to his stratagems, and even wished him to carry her off.

The attempt was made in the following way. Madame de Miramion had been spending the summer of 1648 with her mother-in-law at a country-house near Paris; and early on the morning of the 7th of August, the ladies set forth in a carriage, with a squire and two maid-servants, to pay their devotions at the shrine of Mount Valerian. They were already within a quarter of a league of the mount, when twenty men on horseback suddenly surrounded the carriage, and

attaching to it horses of their own, caused it be driven off in a different direction. Madame de Miramion protested loudly, but in vain; she made every attempt to obtain a rescue, by calling energetically upon every passer-by; but there was no one with power to help her who heard her cries. At length the carriage entered a forest, where the path was so narrow that the mounted escort were obliged to leave the sides of the carriage and to divide, some riding on in front, and others following behind. Madame de Miramion, seeing, as she hoped, a way of escape, watched her opportunity; and, opening the carriage door, sprung out amongst the thorns and brambles that edged their difficult road. Of course, her flight was instantly observed; and fearing that she might be compelled to ride on horseback if she was rebellious, she voluntarily returned to the coach, with her dress torn, her hands and face bleeding with scratches, and her hair hanging loosely over her shoulders. Soon after this the men obliged Madame de Miramion the elder to leave the carriage, and would gladly have retained the young widow alone, or with only one female attendant; but a faithful valet positively refused to leave his mistress, and was allowed to remain. With only these two humble companions, the unfortunate lady was then hurried on through forests, towns, and villages; and although on every possible occasion of being heard she did not fail to renew her cries for assistance, and to throw money out of the carriage window, in hopes of obtaining it, no one made any effort to release her; for the escort constantly declared that she was a poor mad lady, being carried off by an order from the court; and the wildness of her distress, and her disordered appearance, did much to give an air of truth to this infamous tale. Through the whole of that day and night, and until the evening of the second day, the hapless captive was carried further from her home. No food passed her lips, nor did sleep strengthen the exhausted faculties of her body; but her undaunted courage re-

maned as resolute as ever; and when the carriage stopped at length beyond the drawbridges of a stern old castle of the feudal times, when the clanking chains told her that they had been drawn up again so soon as she had entered, and that she was a prisoner within the massive walls of the gloomy courtyard in which the carriage stood, she positively refused either to enter the house or to take refreshment.

The castle was that of Jaunai, about three leagues from Sens, and belonged to Bussy de Rabutin. He professed the greatest astonishment when he heard of the determined resistance which Madame de Miramion had opposed to his stratagem, and sent a gentleman to prevail upon her to alight. This gentleman was a knight of Malta, whose dignity and courtesy impressed her more favourably than the manners of her former escort had done. Inspired, therefore, with a little confidence, she asked him if he was the author of the outrage to which she had been subjected. "No, Madame," he replied, "it is by the orders of Monsieur Bussy de Rabutin, who has assured us that he had obtained your consent." "Then he has spoken falsely," cried Madame de Miramion. "Madame," returned the knight, "we are here two hundred gentlemen, friends of Monsieur de Bussy; but if he has deceived us, be assured that we shall take your part against him, and set you at liberty."

Trusting to the honour of this gentleman, Madame de Miramion at last consented to alight; and entering a low room on the ground floor, she sat down on the cushions of her carriage, first having hastily snatched up two loaded pistols and placed them within her reach. She still, however, refused to touch any food; and although several persons sought both by threats and promises to induce her to entertain the idea of rewarding with her hand the bold lover who had risked so daring an exploit to win her, she was inexorable to all their pleadings, and only repeated continually these two words, "Death or Freedom."

Bussy de Rabutin was so eaten up with vanity, as to be unable to comprehend the inflexibility of Madame de Miramion towards him: "I thought to find a lamb, and I have got a lioness," was his angry exclamation. Convinced, however, at last, that her resistance was not affected, and that he had nothing to hope for, and hearing, moreover, that an armed body of six hundred men were coming from Sens to rescue his captive, he sent word to her by the knight of Malta, that it was by no means his intention to detain her forcibly; and at last, escorted by a dozen gentlemen, he ventured to appear before her in person. Endued with great strength by the sight of her persecutor, Madame de Miramion suddenly started from the cushions, and crying out, "I vow by the living God, my Creator and yours, that I will never be your wife," sunk back utterly exhausted. The doctor, who felt her pulse, thought she was dying; and Bussy de Rabutin, now seriously alarmed, gave her the most solemn assurances that she should be set at liberty, and implored her to take refreshment. But nothing would induce Madame de Miramion to break her forty hours' fast, until she was actually seated in the carriage and all was ready for her departure, when she took a couple of eggs.

Set free at last, the knight of Malta accompanied her to within a hundred yards of the town of Sens, where he took his leave, apologising as best he could for the conduct of *his friend* De Bussy. On his departure, the coachman and postilion also took to flight, riding off with the carriage-horses, fearing lest they should be called to account for their share in the adventure; and thus Madame de Miramion and her two servants were left to make their way into the town on foot. Here they learned that all the citizens were preparing, by the Queen's order, to proceed to the rescue of a lady who had been carried off. "Alas," said Madame de Miramion, "I am that lady." Then all spirit and strength forsook her overtaxed and naturally delicate frame, and on entering the inn she fell danger-

ously ill. She was carried to Paris on a litter, and sunk to such a state of weakness that she received the last Sacraments. After a long illness, however, she gradually recovered. Her family immediately took steps for prosecuting Monsieur de Rabutin for this infamous outrage; but on the petition of the Prince of Condé she cordially forgave him, only making it a condition that he should never again come into her presence. Nor did he venture to break this condition during the next thirty-six years, when some legal affairs making it important that he should obtain an interview with his former idol, she consented to see him, and promoted his interest to the utmost of her power. It is said that this was not the only attempt made to carry off Madame de Miramion, who must therefore have lived in a state of constant terror; but, although only nineteen years of age, she was neither to be frightened nor persuaded by her family into a second marriage, and contented herself with taking refuge from time to time in different convents.

A retreat which she made at the beginning of the year 1649, amongst the Sisters of Charity lately established by Mdlle. Le Gras, decided her future course of life. Yielding to the present desire which possessed her of consecrating herself to God, she finally rejected an eligible offer of marriage which had long been earnestly pressed by all her friends; and secretly devoting her heart to an entire separation from all human attachments, vowed herself thenceforward to a life of good works.

"I am so comfortable, and the poor are so wretched," she said; and she unceasingly turned away her thoughts from her own pleasures and sorrows, to help and comfort these afflicted poor. More especially, if they were affected with any disease that made them loathsome to the eyes of others, would she enlist herself with earnestness in their service; and trampling under foot, as though it were a sin, the extreme natural repugnance which she felt towards all painful sights, she cov

pelled herself to attend upon the sick and wretched, and to perform for them acts of charity from which even their nearest friends had shrunk with disgust. In particular, she nursed with her own hands a poor girl who was severely afflicted with the scald, and whom no one else would touch. Day by day she persevered in this heroic charity, until the girl was quite restored, when Madame de Miramion paid her portion to gain her admittance into a convent, where she had the happiness of seeing her become a religious of the most fervent piety; and all her life long, she continued to feel that she owed a debt of gratitude to this girl: so joyfully did she embrace every opportunity of serving God.

Accustomed from her earliest infancy to be surrounded by wealth, and with a keenly susceptible taste for all that was elegant and beautiful, she was yet ready to renounce all as worthless, if ever it seemed to come into collision with that one object for which she now lived. The black and white velvet hangings with which, in a moment of unconscious yielding to her natural tastes, she had allowed her rooms to be hung, were torn down remorselessly with her own hands, on hearing from the lips of a friend some expression of an opinion that such grandeur was inconsistent with Christian widowhood. She sold her pearl necklace for 24,000 francs, when her income was too severely taxed by her unbounded charities; her plate was devoted to the same pious object; and, when only twenty years old, still beautiful and universally admired, she cut off all her hair; and renouncing for ever all gay and rich apparel, clothed herself from that time in black or grey woollen stuffs.

We have said nothing all this while about Madame de Miramion's little daughter; but it must not, therefore, be supposed that she allowed her extensive good works to interfere with her maternal duties. On the contrary, she was scrupulously diligent in their performance. The child's health was very delicate, and

she often fell into severe illnesses; and, under these circumstances, Madame de Miramion, whilst keeping her heart resigned to surrender her to God if such should be His will, and even praying that the child might die rather than grow up unworthy of her Christian profession, yet left nothing undone which the most anxious mother could devise for the preservation of her life. At the same time, she used the utmost care to bring her up in the practice of all Christian virtues, more especially of charity; she accustomed her, whilst still very young, to visit the poor; to deny herself for their sakes, and to be, in fact, a little Sister of Charity. Nothing was forced upon her, but she was taught to make the better choice for herself. "Here are two dresses," her mother would say to her, "of which you may choose one; and if you choose the plainer of the two, you will then have four pistoles left to give to the poor." On the other hand, she would not leave her in ignorance of the world, in which her rank and fortune entitled her to take so high a place. She caused her, therefore, to be taught to dance, and even took her to a ball, in order that, not merely by the report of others, but by her own observation, she might learn the frivolous vanity of such amusements. Mademoiselle de Miramion afterwards married M. de Jemmel; and on this occasion she showed that the lessons of her admirable mother had not been thrown away upon her, by prevailing on her spouse to devote a 1000 louis, which were to have been spent in jewels, to the service of the poor. Moreover, Madame de Miramion stipulated that her daughter should have free control over her vast fortune, in order that she might not be hindered in carrying on those works of charity with which she had been familiar from the cradle.

But we have been anticipating the progress of events, and must return to Madame de Miramion, still in her twentieth year, and give a brief account of her course of active charity. The first thing she did, after concluding her retreat amongst the Sisters of Charity,

was to found an asylum for poor orphan girls; with whom she used frequently to spend much of her time, sitting amongst them like a mother. Her mornings were devoted to visiting the poor in their own homes, and her afternoons to the hospitals. "How much more has God done for me than I for these poor," was her reply to a lady who blamed her for taking so much trouble with unworthy and ungrateful people; "and how great is His mercy, in affording me these little opportunities of satisfying His justice!" Not contented with these laborious duties in Paris, she frequently made excursions into the neighbouring villages, to converse with the peasant women, and to lead them to think of God; and she took an active part in establishing regular schools amongst them.

But her director, a wise and prudent man, fearing the effect of so much active benevolence upon her own mind, abruptly checked her in the midst of this career of usefulness; and bade her enter into retreat for a year that she might consider deeply the state of her own soul. "You must begin with yourself," he said, "before you think of others: dissipation, even in good works, is dangerous; solitude is necessary for you. Speak to God in the depths of your own heart; show Him your wants; accustom yourself to His divine presence. Moses remained forty days in the mount, before he spoke to the people who were waiting for him. Let prayer, meditation, and spiritual readings, fill up your entire day. You require many graces amidst the constant temptations of the world; lay up an abundant supply of them, before exposing yourself again to these temptations." Strictly obedient to this advice, Madame de Miramion immediately renounced the good works, which had become her very meat and drink; and retiring from the world, entered into a retreat, which she kept religiously for the time appointed, a whole year. These are some of her resolutions, written during this period: "To act in all temporal affairs according to the spirit which was in Christ Jesus; to pray dili-

gently night and day for my child ; to give her a taste for exertion, though she is so young ; to fill her with holy and profitable thoughts ; to make her happy ; to try to bring her up as a dear child of the Church, offering her daily to God ; to talk familiarly with my people, and especially to lead my female servants to pray. * * * To speak of Christian virtue with my brothers ; and if I am obliged to reprove them, to do so with humility and shamefacedness ; to keep my worldly affairs in order : pay every thing, save what I can, especially in my own and my daughter's personal expenditure ; give all the rest of my income to the poor, and exhort my brothers to give to them also. * * * To make myself obeyed rather by petitions than commands, and to receive all the services that are rendered to me as so many acts of charity. * * * Never to look out for comfort or enjoyment ; to live by faith and for the love of God. * * * To be content ; receiving contradictions, contempt, and sorrows with joy, thanking God for them, and begging Him to continue and increase them. To embrace humiliations like a treasure ; to love no creature except in God. * * * To make use of none except as stepping-stones towards Him ; to smile as kindly as before on those who have done or said something against me, &c. &c." So faithfully did she follow out this last resolution, that it was commonly said of her, that the surest way of gaining her heart was to disoblige her.

When the year's retreat was concluded, her confessor allowed her to resume her works of active charity, convinced that her spiritual welfare would be furthered, not endangered, by them. Being made treasurer for the poor of her parish, she had now abundant occupation ; the more so, since the civil wars had greatly increased the number of poor in Paris. By her means two thousand persons were daily supplied with soup ; but so much satisfaction did she feel in feeding the hungry, that she often made it a point of conscience to deny herself the joy of distributing this food with her

own hands. "When I serve the poor, I have no merit," she would say; "I am rewarded by the pleasure it gives me." Large as her income was, it was by no means adequate to the continual demands which her unbounded charities imposed upon it; yet the following incident will show that it was the *true* spirit of Christian charity that governed her actions, and that she cared more for preserving this than for any amount of material good which she might do. Her husband's grandfather having become much attached to her for her wit, gentleness, and amiability, left at his death a hundred thousand crowns to her little daughter. Although this sum would have enabled Madame de Miramion and her daughter widely to extend their many benevolent schemes, yet, finding that the legacy was likely to involve some family disputes, she immediately renounced in her own and her daughter's name all claim to the disputed money.

Whilst her daughter was yet young, Madame de Miramion was seized with a severe illness, which brought her in danger of death. Her only anxiety was for her beloved child, to whom she addressed in writing the most devout recommendations. By and by she was restored to comparative health; but soon became conscious of a very painful cancer, which she endured without a murmur; and would gladly have rejected all attempts at alleviation, offering her torments a willing sacrifice to God. Her friends at length persuaded her to try the waters of Bourbon; and she availed herself of this opportunity to do good in another sphere. She attended on the poor in the hospital, gave silver chalices to the churches, and set in order throughout the parish whatever was wanting to the due honour of God in His public worship. Her infirm state prevented her from spending much time in church; but she accustomed herself to realise the Divine Presence wherever she was. On returning from Bourbon, she took a house near the convent in which her daughter was placed for education, that so she might have constant opportunities of

watching over her; and finding herself thus brought within easy reach of the Hotel Dieu, she became a frequent visitor to the patients there. She was much grieved to observe that the sick priests were mingled with the other patients, and that due respect was not paid to their sacred office; she therefore proposed to the first president, de Lamoignon, that a special ward should be set apart for ecclesiastics; and in order that there might be the less difficulty in doing this, she herself founded an endowment for two beds, and collected alms sufficient to provide ten others, besides an attendant who should be devoted exclusively to the service of those who were admitted into this ward. This foundation still subsists, and has not yet been increased.

Another of her good works about this time was the receiving into her house twenty-eight poor nuns, whose convent on the frontiers of Picardy had been destroyed in the war, and who were absolutely beggars in Paris. She received them all, fed and provided for them, waiting on them with her own hands for the space of six months; by which time she had either procured admission for them to other houses, or enabled them to return to their homes. She also contributed largely to the assistance of the priests and bishops who were being now sent out on missionary duties to heathen lands. Christianity had already made great progress in India, in China, and even in Japan; but the constant persecutions to which the priests were subject from the idolaters were but too often fatal to them, so that the churches were left without the daily sacrifice, and the Christians without a pastor. It was thought that the most effectual way of remedying these evils would be to provide resident bishops, who might be able to ordain priests from amongst the natives. Accordingly, the Pope consecrated three bishops in Rome for this mission; and they came to Paris to make needful preparations for the extensive work they had undertaken. Considerable funds were necessary, which the Duchess d'Aiguillon and Madame de Miramion were instantly

ready to supply. Madame de Miramion also placed at their disposal a house which she had about ten leagues from Paris. Here the bishops, and twenty priests who were appointed to accompany them, spent eighteen months in retreat and solemn preparation for the important duties of their mission. All their wants were supplied by the same munificent hand; and they were liberally provided with whatever could contribute to their favourable reception amongst the people whom they were going to win for God—books, medicines, healing ointments, and different objects of curiosity which might be useful as presents.

Soon after the marriage of her daughter, Madame de Miramion would fain have retired from active life; for her heart yearned for the pious seclusion of a cloister. Her wish was, to become a Carmelite of the strictest observance; but this was so much opposed by those who were best able to appreciate her true vocation, that she immediately abandoned the idea. She was allowed, however, to retire to a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine, and to take five or six women of kindred spirit with her, there to form a little community, as it were, by themselves. She refused to be considered as the founder of a religious order; but her own humility could not prevent others from giving to these sisters, who were supported solely at her expense, the name of *Miraminnés*; a name which they retained until, nine years later, they were incorporated with the Community of St. Genevieve. By this step she was separated from her brothers, with whom she had hitherto been accustomed to live,—and the trial was severe; however, she never ceased to keep up the most friendly and affectionate intercourse with them, and to serve them to the utmost of her power. She herself, with the sisters under her care, were now given unremittingly to works of charity. They taught children, prepared schoolmistresses for the neighbouring villages, instructed ignorant women, visited the poor and the sick,—even dressing their wounds, and compounding the medicines that were

required with their own hands. No work of mercy came amiss to her; she was ready to undertake every thing with the permission of the magistrates; she hired a house near her own, and placing two discreet women in charge of it, she sought to reclaim some of the unfortunate women who swarmed in the streets of Paris. She began with receiving seven or eight: and these at first felt nothing but resentment at their imprisonment; but the gentleness and patience of their benefactor won most of them at length to embrace a life of virtue. Encouraged by this success, she determined to extend this opportunity for good; and with the assistance of three pious and wealthy ladies, all contributing an equal sum of money (10,000 francs), a large house was built, which was placed under Madame de Miramion's superintendence, and afterwards took the name of St. Pélagie.

What she could not do by herself, she inspired others to do for her. Thus, in the great scarcity of 1662, when provisions were so dear that the President of the General Hospital of Paris told her that he feared that establishment would be ruined, immediately she felt herself called upon to strain every nerve to avert such a calamity. She went, therefore, to the Princess de Conti, niece of Cardinal Mazarin, and told her anxiety. This excellent princess desired her to call again on the following morning, when Madame de Miramion was both amazed and delighted at receiving from her the sum of 100,000 francs. "Say nothing to me about it," said the princess, on perceiving Madame de Miramion's astonishment; "I am only too happy that God is willing to make use of me towards saving the lives of so many of His creatures." And by this means the hospital was saved from ruin.

About this time the daughter of the first president of the hospital, de Lamoignon, fell sick of the small-pox; and Madame de Miramion, who had been associated with her for many years in all her good works for the poor, instantly went to the bedside of her friend,

shut herself up with her as nurse, and could not be prevailed upon to leave until death released the sufferer. She had been the secret almoner both of her father and of the king; and upon her death Madame de Miramion succeeded to her in the confidence of both those personages, and was employed by them in a similar capacity.

In 1673 a frightful contagious disease broke out among the troops stationed at Melun; all intercourse with other towns was prohibited, and most of the inhabitants fled in terror, leaving the sick to die alone, and often without the consolations of religion. Even the magistrates and public officers were on the point of deserting the town in the general panic which prevailed, when Madame de Miramion, whose family estate lay near that place, hearing of what had happened, hurried fearlessly to the spot, accompanied by doctors and religious sisters, to aid the unfortunate people. Her name was alone sufficient to induce the magistrates to give up their shameful flight, and to cause them to assemble for the consideration of what measures could be taken for the mitigation of the evil. A suitable building was soon selected, to be used as a hospital, to which Madame de Miramion caused all useful furniture to be brought from her own mansion; whereupon many others followed her example, and the place was speedily ready for the reception of the sick. The Grey Sisters who had accompanied her from Paris were appointed to attend upon those who were received into this hospital; and Madame de Miramion herself waited night and day upon the dying, exhorting and comforting them in their agony, and sparing neither labour nor money, so that she might in any way alleviate their sufferings. She especially devoted herself to the officers, and to the care of their souls rather than of their bodies; she continually urged upon them the necessity they were under in their present condition to be always prepared for sudden death. Weak and suffering as they were, they gave a willing ear to all her arguments; for

her angelic charity had already won their hearts. Numbers of them made general confessions, and formed most excellent resolutions for such portion of life as might yet be spared them; whilst many more passed to their account with every mark of true penitence for the past. Madame de Miramion forgot her own sufferings in this engrossing occupation, during which she was supported by a supernatural strength; and when, after a sojourn of two months, she returned completely exhausted to Paris, and heard that the same disease was now raging at Senlis, it was with the greatest difficulty that she was prevented from hurrying off to render the same services there also.

Madame de Miramion was as remarkable for her skill in bringing quarrels to a happy termination, as for her active exertions in behalf of the distressed. No violence of temper could resist her quiet dignity and gentle pleadings. On one occasion she was expressly requested by the Bishop of Angers to restore harmony to a religious community, where disputes ran so high that even the voice of the bishop was not regarded. She instantly set out, with two of her sisters; and being met at the distance of half a league from the town by almost all its inhabitants, she repaired with them to the church, where all joined in chanting the *Te Deum*. After this she went to the disturbed convent; and by her wise management succeeded in sifting every grievance to the bottom; then, having made arrangements for a new order of government, she left the community at peace within itself, and going to the bishop, laid before him all that she had done, and earnestly prayed him to forget that such unhappy discord had ever existed. On another occasion, being present when a person of high rank refused to pardon one of his children who had offended him, she threw herself upon her knees at his feet, as if she had been herself the culprit, and disarmed the angry father of all his resentment by her humble petitions. In all differences amongst the poor, her word seemed sufficient to reconcile the fiercest op-

ponents: the husband would forgive his wife, and the mother her daughter, the most grievous injuries, at the instance of this angel of charity.

Fearing, however, that her interior life was in danger of being too much distracted by the constant claims that were made on her by the round of active benevolence in which she lived, she became once more desirous of secluding herself from the world in a cloister; but her confessor would not hear of it. He bade her write an account of her life, for the benefit of those who should come after her. She obeyed; but when the account was read, it was found that not one of all the dazzling acts of charity with which, like so many stars, her whole life was brilliant, were recorded in it; she had only noticed with humble gratitude the favours and graces with which God had marked her path. Another instance also of her humility is worth mentioning. One day, during her absence, a resolution was passed by the Daughters of St. Genevieve, in the presence of a notary, wherein Madame de Miramion was recorded, as, indeed, she well deserved to be, as their benefactress and founder. The Superior approved of the act; but when Madame de Miramion heard of it, she instantly sent for the same notary, before whom she utterly disclaimed all the merit that had been ascribed to her, and mentioned the name of another lady, to whom, if any honour were due that ought not rather to be ascribed to God, she begged it might be given. The same spirit of perfect humility is evident in all her writings. They breathe the very essence of a soul detached from the world, waiting upon God, and profoundly obedient to those who speak in His name.

It is impossible in this brief memoir to do more than glance at the most striking public acts of her unbounded charity. Besides those already spoken of, she zealously co-operated in all that was being done in her time for deserted children. She was present when St. Vincent of Paul delivered his memorable discourse, and constantly assisted in every measure taken to promote this

object. One day returning home, she was pained to see a number of young girls idle, and playing rudely in the streets. Her sympathies were instantly aroused; and knowing of how many mischiefs idleness is the mother, she first obtained the approbation of their parents, and then asked them in a cheerful tone, and without a word of reproach for their conduct, whether they would like to be employed. Most of the poor girls received the proposal with gladness; whereupon she hired a large room, and obtained work for them. More than eighty, in her own parish alone, were thus rescued from the streets; and the same good work was simultaneously undertaken for other parts of Paris, and in many neighbouring towns. Large alms for this institution were obtained from the king. The girls came in the morning, worked all day, were provided with their dinners, and then returned at night to their parents; and at the end of each week they were paid for what they had done. Provision was even made for the accommodation of those who had no home. It is impossible to tell the amount of good that resulted to these poor girls from this institution; they were instructed by spiritual reading, and taught every thing that could be of service to them both for this world and the next.

It is said that Madame de Miramion established in the course of her life more than one hundred schools; and that she founded, from her own resources, more than two hundred missions. In truth, all that she had was devoted to her Lord in His poor and suffering members; it was no exaggeration, when she replied one day to her man of business, who had come to announce a heavy financial loss which she had just sustained, "It is not I who am to be pitied, but the poor." Her house was always open to all ladies who wished to enter into retreat for a few days in the year; and having heard with what success an attempt made by the Jesuits to afford opportunities of this kind to men of all conditions of life had been attended, she became anxious to extend the privilege to persons of her own sex also.

And although the establishment of these public retreats met at first with much opposition, yet she triumphed at length over every difficulty, and purchased a house admirably suited for the purpose, containing fifty separate cells, besides a refectory and a chapel. She was always ready to pay the pension for those amongst the poor who wished to avail themselves of this advantage; and many ladies of rank, touched with the striking example thus given them, brought her their necklaces, rings, and other jewels, that they might be devoted to the same good purpose.

In 1694, the poor of Paris suffered great privations in consequence of the extreme scarcity of corn; so that in the Hotel Dieu alone there were nearly six thousand patients. Madame de Miramion, who spent the chief part of her time there during this sickly season—"for the road of the hospitals leads to heaven," she was wont to say—was much grieved at observing how much the unhappy sufferers were inconvenienced by being crowded together, and prevailed upon the magistrates to open a second hospital for their better accommodation. Full permission was given her to act in the matter; and without losing a day, she set to work so diligently, that the hospital of St. Louis was soon ready, and filled from the over-crowded Hotel Dieu. At the same time, she persuaded the king and Madame de Maintenon to procure a large quantity of rice, to be brought to Paris and sold at a very cheap rate for those who could not afford to buy wheat; and from her own community alone she distributed every other day six thousand messes of soup. In vain did the discontented and ungrateful rail at her, as they always will even at their best benefactors. "Courage," she said to her sisters; "take courage: the more you receive contradictions from men, the more does your merit increase before God. Let them talk, but do you continue to serve them; your patience will prevail in the end." And so it did: few were so hardened as not at length to humble themselves before her, in com-

erte penitence for any injurious language they had used in moments of passion.

The heavy expenses incurred by the General Hospital during this year of scarcity so reduced its funds, that the administrators began to contemplate the necessity of dismissing a large proportion of the poor; and their choice fell upon seven hundred women of bad character, who were in the house: Madame de Miramion, grieved at the fearful prospect which such a step would open before these destitute creatures, first persuaded the administrators that with the annual sum of forty thousand francs they could still continue to harbour them, and then herself undertook to supply the money. Her first application for assistance was directed to Madame de Maintenon, who contributed with a liberal hand; and thus she literally *begged* alms from other persons, until in the short space of a single week she had realised the sum of fifty thousand francs. This money sufficed to maintain the women for two years, before which time most of them married or obtained situations; so that by this timely aid hundreds were rescued from destitution both of body and soul. And let not the reader suppose that the task of begging was one at all congenial to Madame de Miramion's natural inclinations; she shrunk from it with extreme sensitiveness, and observed one day to the sister who accompanied her in these expeditions, "One must indeed love God to do this."

The time was now approaching when this active spirit was to rest from its incessant toils. In 1696, after making a retreat, she was sent for in haste by her friend the Princess of Guise, who was dying, and trembling at the thought of death, notwithstanding her great piety. Madame de Miramion hastened to console and support her, and remained by her bed-side until she died; then returning to Paris, she went to bed, feeling exhausted from constant watching, and weary from her ceaseless exhortations to her late friend. The next

morning she was found to be seriously ill; though she had suffered so patiently during the night as not to disturb any one. In spite of the best medical assistance, her pains grew more severe; but she quietly made an offering of them all to God. "I am afraid I shall grow impatient," she said to her confessor; "I suffer so very much." "It is well for you so to suffer, Madame," replied he; "you may perhaps in this way escape the pangs of purgatory." "Oh," exclaimed the dying lady, "how great will be the mercy of God, if He deigns to accept of these sufferings to that end!"

Her affectionate daughter, now a widow, besought her to pray to God for a restoration of health; but she was only too happy in the prospect of approaching death. "My daughter," said she, with a smiling countenance, "I must go to enjoy Him; I have greatly offended Him, but I hope in His mercy." Her sufferings were extreme, and she kissed incessantly a crucifix which she held in her hand. "Our Saviour," said her daughter, "attaches you to His cross." "Yes," she replied, "I am too happy in the part which I have in His sufferings. This dear crucifix,—I have had it for thirty years,—I give it you now, as my parting legacy." Her brothers stood by her side, and the tenderest marks of lively affection passed between them; for natural love had never grown cold in her heart, detached though it was from all earthly objects. She wished to have elected a new superior for her community on her death-bed, that so she might die a simple sister of St. Genevieve; but this her confessor would not allow. She recommended her community and all its good works to Madame de Maintenon; and when her confessor, who heard this request, said with some surprise, "What, Madame! do you now think of any thing but God?" "Yes, sir," she gently replied, "when it is for God."

Her niece, who bent over her dying pillow, heard her murmur in a feeble voice, "My God, I accept of death, and the destruction of this my body; be it re-

duced to dust;—be it the food of the worm! and then, my soul, go forth and unite thyself to thy God!” And with these words upon her lips, she passed to her eternal rest, after an illness of only a single week.

Her brothers, her daughter, and her community, all stood around her bed. But not a tear was shed;—it was impossible to weep with a selfish sorrow, when so glorious an eternity was opening before the beloved departed. Her lips and eyelids closed quietly of their own accord, and an angelic expression settled upon all her features as they grew rigid in death. No sooner did the tidings reach the anxious crowds who besieged her doors, than they were forced open by bereaved multitudes, all greedy of one more look at their generous benefactress. For two days the house was left free to all visitors for this purpose; and then the venerated remains were carried, without pomp or parade, to the parish-church, and there buried with the greatest simplicity. Six poor men bore the coffin; thirty Sisters, with lighted tapers, followed; then eighty girls from the work-rooms which have been spoken of, the Superioress of the General Hospital, and the women who had been saved by her recent exertions from being turned once more into the streets; and lastly, her own relations, and an immense crowd of grateful pensioners. What lights, trappings, or ceremonies, could have supplied so beautiful and befitting a pageant to the funeral of Madame de Miramion!

The most celebrated men of the age never failed to make honourable mention of this most excellent woman. The king was said “to refuse her nothing;” and Bossuet, the revered Bishop of Meaux, held her in the greatest esteem, and frequently corresponded with her: and it is no slight testimony to her practical wisdom, that the rules which she prescribed for the management of her charitable institutions are retained, even at the present day, for the government of all similar establishments in France. The community of which she was

the foundress continued to give its name to the Quay of St. Bernard in Paris, where their house was situated, until the revolution of 1793; but has not, unhappily, been revived since that disastrous period.



MRS. ELIZA A. SETON

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MRS. ELIZA A. SETON.

CHAPTER I.



HE subject of this narrative was the daughter of Dr. Richard Bayley, an eminent physician in the city of New York; and was born on the 28th of August, 1774, nearly two years before the declaration of American independence. Her mother was the daughter of an Episcopalian clergyman, but died before the subject of our story had completed her third year. Too young to appreciate the loss she had sustained, Miss Bayley gave to her surviving parent all the love generally shared between father and mother; and the attachment thus formed continued undiminished during Dr. Bayley's life. He was a most tender and careful father, and was fully rewarded for all his watchfulness and affection by the fond anxiety of his little daughter to fulfil his slightest wish. Never was she known to disobey him; and his approbation was her highest incentive to perseverance in her studies. Even after her marriage, she writes to him, saying, "Your spirit surrounds your child, who checks each word you would prevent, and pursues every action you would approve." And in her younger days so lively was her filial love, that she would hurry through her daily lessons at school, in order to be at liberty to watch for her father on his way down the street; when, if possible, she would rush out to meet and embrace him, and return to the school-room before her absence had been observed.

The talents of our heroine were of a high order; and

from natural inclination, as well as a desire to please her father, she devoted herself assiduously to the cultivation of them. But at that time, and more especially during the period of the American revolution, opportunities for education were scarce in the New World; and it was almost entirely under the teaching and direction of her father that her studies were pursued. He was a man of great ability, and took as much pains to train and regulate the minds committed to his superintendence as to store them with useful knowledge. Due self-restraint, he wisely taught his children, was necessary to their happiness; and some of these lessons were not lost upon his daughter. At the age of eighteen, with a lively temperament and all the charms of fashionable society about her, she showed that she laboured to reduce to practice this wholesome doctrine of self-government; and that from the highest motives. Writing down the result of a self-examination, to which she constantly subjected herself, she says, "I trust the day will come when I may show a more regular and Christian disposition. Perhaps it may; it may not. Those passions must be governed. I have a most unaccountable wish to see E——— this morning; but I will not go a step out of my way. If fortune should so direct, I think I should be very grateful; if not, I will try and think that 'tis best." Again, writing to a friend, she says, "Although I make it a rule never to answer letters whilst under the influence of the first impressions I receive from them, &c."

With these habits of self-restraint, so unusual in persons of her age and creed, there was united also, even from her earliest youth, a strong tendency to devotion. She used to delight in reading the Scriptures, and writing copious notes and comments upon them. She scrutinised her daily conduct with rigid penetration; and kept constantly before her mind a high standard of excellence, to attain which every worldly consideration was to give way. Although baptised and confirmed in the Protestant Episcopal Church, and strictly

observant of its forms and doctrines, her mind was singularly free from prejudice or bigotry; nay, there seems to have existed from an early period an unconscious leaning towards that faith which she finally embraced. She was in the habit of wearing a small crucifix, and wondering that this sacred symbol was not more generally kept in view; and whenever she read of convents, she would earnestly express a wish that amongst Protestants also the conventual life were possible.

When Miss Bayley had reached her twentieth year, she became the wife of Mr. William Seton, a highly respectable merchant of her native city, part of whose early life had been spent in a mercantile house in Leghorn; a circumstance upon which, as the sequel of our narrative will show, was mysteriously dependent her conversion to the Catholic faith, and all its consequent blessings to countless souls. Endearred to a large circle of admiring friends by her lively disposition and numerous virtues, and married to an estimable and prosperous man, every worldly happiness seemed now to be opened around her; but instead of forgetting in these gifts their transitory nature, she kept strictly before her mind that every dispensation of life came from God; and was thus not unprepared for those trials and adversities which it was His will should be her portion. Within the first year of her marriage, writing to her husband, who was necessarily absent from her and exposed to some danger of the yellow fever, she calms her natural anxiety by the reflection that "patience and submission are the only ways to gain the blessings of Heaven." And to another person she writes, "We are not always to have what we like best in this world, thank Heaven! for if we had, how soon we should forget the other, the place of endless peace; where they who were united by virtue and affection here will surely enjoy that union so often interrupted while on their journey home." Nor are these remarks mere matters of course; from Mrs. Seton they meant all they said. Naturally amiable though she was, it was in constant

prayer and meditation that she sought for strength and wisdom to meet the exigencies of her daily intercourse with the world. Much of her time was always spent in this manner; and it was not in words only, but in heart and soul, that she referred every event and hope to God.

About the beginning of the year 1800, her husband's affairs became much embarrassed from the consequences of the war, and other vicissitudes always incident to trade. Mrs. Seton's well-disciplined mind, however, rose in proportion to the necessities of the occasion; and she not only cheered him by her unfailing courage and fortitude, but aided him efficiently in the arrangement of his papers. "It would not do," she said, "for hearts and fortunes to sink together." For her own part, she turned her strength and consolation to the only source of both; and the following prayer will show very vividly the true state of her mind at this period of her life: "The cup that our Father has given us, shall we not drink it? O blessed Saviour! by the bitterness of Thy pains we may estimate the power of Thy love; we are sure of Thy kindness and compassion. Thou wouldest not willingly call on us to suffer; Thou hast declared unto us that all things shall work together for our good, if we are faithful to Thee; and therefore, if Thou so ordainest it, welcome disappointment and poverty, welcome sickness and pain, welcome even shame and contempt and calumny. If this be a rough and thorny path, it is one which Thou hast gone before us. Where we see Thy footsteps, we cannot repine. Meanwhile, Thou wilt support us with the consolations of Thy grace; and even here Thou canst more than compensate us for any temporal sufferings, by the possession of that peace which the world can neither give nor take away."

In the course of years Mrs. Seton became the mother of five children, Anna-Maria, William, Richard, Catherine-Josephine, and Rebecca. She was the tenderest and fondest of mothers; but her love was purified and

strengthened by the continual reflection that she had received these children from God to train them for His kingdom. She watched over their spiritual welfare even more anxiously than over their temporal; and was not restrained by any human weakness from guiding them inflexibly in what she believed to be the right way. Still, her reproofs were mingled with sweetness; and with the sure tact of a mother's heart, she won them to the knowledge and love of virtue. She would write short notes to them on particular occasions, which impressed their minds with contrition for their little faults, and inspired desires to form and persevere in the happiest resolutions; nor was any opportunity suffered to pass away unimproved, that could lead their infant hearts to God. The following note, addressed to her eldest daughter when a very little girl, may be taken as a specimen of the simple but earnest tone of unaffected goodness which pervades these compositions: "My dearest Anna must remember that our Blessed Lord gave us the parable of the wise and foolish virgins to make us careful to choose our part with the wise ones, and to keep us in readiness for His coming, which will be in an hour that we know not of; and should He find us, dear child, out of the road of our duty, like sheep gone astray from their shepherd, where shall we hide from His presence, who can see through the darkest shades, and bring us from the furthest ends of the world? If we would please Him, and be found amongst His children, we must learn what our duty is, pray to Him for grace to do it, and then set our whole heart and soul to perform it. And what is your duty, my dear child? You know it, and I pray God to keep you in it; that in that blessed day when He shall come to call us to our heavenly home, we may see our dear Anna in the number of those blessed children to whom He will say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.'

"Your own dear mother."

Not was it to her own children alone that Mrs

Seton's influence was confined. She sought, wherever it was possible, to draw the hearts of others to the consideration of their true welfare; and that in a strain of such affectionate solicitude, that her efforts were seldom altogether without effect. And not content with giving good advice, she also set a most edifying example of active charity towards the poor and suffering. So zealous was she in this respect, that she and another relative who frequently accompanied her were commonly called Protestant Sisters of Charity. One who knew her well at this time says of her, "she considered no sacrifice too great to promote the glory of her heavenly Parent, and add to the felicity of her fellow-creatures."

It is worthy of remark also, with what singular fervour and devotion Mrs. Seton was in the habit of receiving the Lord's Supper, as it is called, in the Episcopal Church. Her whole soul was bent on reaching our Saviour's presence; and she would often after the service obtain some of the remaining elements, and even go from one church to another to renew her participation in this rite, which appears to have been administered, at certain fixed but rare intervals, simultaneously in all the churches of the city.

In 1801 she lost her venerated and beloved father, Dr. Bayley. The close attachment subsisting between parent and child had been only more firmly cemented by the lapse of years; and although her father had married a second time, and she herself was surrounded by all the engrossments of a young family, Mrs. Seton never failed to devote a portion of every day to visiting him in the midst of his arduous and benevolent labours. Health-physician to the port of New York during the last three or four years of his life, he found full scope for his unbounded philanthropy among the vessels detained in quarantine on account of the yellow fever, which was then raging. The scenes of distress all around him were past description; yet there his energetic and generous spirit seemed to find its true element. He was every where amongst the sick and the dying; always

cheerful, and never wearying. Gladly would his daughter have been at his side, to share his noble efforts for the poor suffering emigrants, who were dying by hundreds; indeed, so strongly was her sympathy excited on their behalf, that nothing but her father's positive prohibition kept her from weaning her own infant, that she might become a nurse to some of those unfortunate babes who were perishing, simply from want of nourishment, beside their dead or dying mothers. She was also much struck at this time by the religious devotion which she witnessed among the poor Irish emigrants, whose first act on landing at Staten Island was to assemble under the open canopy of heaven, and kneeling down, to adore God for His mercy. It was in the discharge of his duty amongst the emigrants, that Dr. Bayley was at last seized with the illness which, within a week, carried him to the grave. Mrs. Seton's anguish can scarcely be described; she watched day and night beside his bed, soothing him and praying for him: but her special subject of anxiety was the prospect of his soul for all eternity. It is true that he was much respected and beloved for his generous benevolence and many other excellent qualities; but he had imbibed what were then called "philosophical principles;" so that the loving and devout heart of his daughter was tortured by uncertainty as to the condition of his soul in the sight of God. Under these circumstances no sacrifice seemed too great, if only she could wring there from some confidence as to his acceptance with God. Leaving his dying bed for an instant, she took from the cradle her sleeping infant; and going out into the open air, she raised it to heaven, and thus appealed to Infinite Love: "O Jesus, my merciful Father and God, take this little innocent offering; I give it to Thee with all my heart; take it, my Lord, but save my father's soul!" The child was, however, spared, to become with its mother a member of the true Church; and Dr. Bayley expired on the 16th of August, 1801.

Under this heavy trial, Mrs. Seton's determination

to love and to serve God was only the more strengthened; and she thus records her firm resolve to use every means in her power to "work out her salvation." "Solemnly, in the presence of my Judge, I resolve through His grace to remember my infirmity and my sin; to keep the door of my lips; to consider the cause of sorrow for sin in myself, and those whose souls are as dear to me as my own; to check and restrain all useless words; to deny myself, and exercise that severity that I know is due to my sin; to judge myself, thereby trusting through mercy that I shall not be severely judged by my Lord."

CHAPTER II.

IN the spring of 1803 Mr. Seton's health, always delicate, sensibly declined; and a sea voyage was recommended by his physicians. He therefore resolved upon visiting Italy, and renewing personally an intimacy formed in youth, and continued by commercial intercourse, with the Messrs. Filicchi, distinguished merchants of Leghorn. Mrs. Seton could not allow him to travel in his weak state without her watchful care; and taking her eldest daughter, then eight years old, for her little companion, she committed her other children to the care of her relations during her absence. Little at the time did she contemplate the momentous results that journey was to bring forth. Her mind was absorbed in anxious uncertainty about her husband's health; but her confidence in God still kept her calm and resigned.

"Not one struggle nor desponding thought to contend with," she writes to a friend when about midway on her passage to Italy; "confiding hope and consoling peace have attended my way through storms and dangers that must have terrified a soul whose rock is not Christ."

Her child caught the hooping-cough on the voyage; and she was thus constantly occupied in nursing both her sick husband and suffering child. Neither her courage, however, nor her patience, seem ever to have failed her; not even when, on their arrival at Leghorn, they were prevented from landing, or at least were obliged to remain for some time in the lazaretto, "an immense prison," Mrs. Seton writes, "with a high window, double-grated with iron; through which, if I should want any thing, I am to call a sentinel with a cocked hat and long rifled gun." This mournful introduction to Leghorn is thus touchingly described in her journal by the affectionate wife who had so fondly hoped that her husband might find renewed life in Italy. It being "explained that our ship was the first to bring the news of the yellow fever in New York, she must go out into the roads; and my poor William being sick, must go with his baggage to the lazaretto."

"At this moment the band of music that always welcomes strangers came under our cabin-window, playing 'Hail Columbia,' and those little tunes that set the darlings dancing and singing at home. Mrs. O'Brien," the captain's wife, "and the rest, were almost wild with joy; while I was glad to hide in my berth the full heart of sorrow which seemed as if it must break. You cannot have an idea of the looks of my poor William, who seemed as if he could not live over the day."

Landed at length, "we were directed to go opposite to the window of the capitano's house, in which sat Mrs. Philip Filicetti—compliments and kind looks without number. A fence was between us, but I fear did not hide my fatigues both of soul and body. First we had cherries handed, or rather placed for us; for after we had touched them they could not go back to the house. At length we were shown the door we were to enter—No. 6, up twenty stone steps—a room with high arched ceilings, brick floor, and naked walls.

The capitano sent three warm eggs, a bottle of wine, and some slices of bread.

"William's mattress was soon spread, and he upon it; he could not touch wine or eggs. Our little syrups, currant-jelly, drinks, &c. which he must have every half-hour on board ship,—where were they? I had heard the lazaretto was the very place for comfort for the sick, and brought nothing; soon found there was a little closet, in which my knees found rest; and after emptying my heart and washing the bricks with my tears, returned to my poor William, and found him and Anna both in want of a preacher. Dear girl, she soon found a rope that had tied her box, and began jumping away to warm herself; for the coldness of the walls and bricks made us shiver. At sunset, dinner came from the kind Filicchis, and other necessaries; we went to the grate again to see them. And now, on the ship mattresses spread on this cool floor, William and Anna are sound asleep; and I trust that God, who has given him strength to go through a day of such exertion, will carry us on. He is our all indeed. My eyes smart so much with crying, wind, and fatigue, that I must close them and lift up my heart; sleep won't come very easily. If you had seen little Anna's arms clasped around my neck at her prayers, while the tears rolled a stream, how you would love her! I read her to sleep with pieces of trust in God; she said, 'Mamma, if papa should die here—but God will be with us.' God is with us; and if sufferings abound in us, His consolations also greatly abound, and far exceed our utterance. If the wind (for it is said there never were such storms at this season) that now almost puts out my light, and blows on my William through every crevice, and over our chimney like loud thunder, could come from any but His command; or if the circumstances that have placed us in so forlorn a situation were not guided by His hand, miserable indeed would be our case. Within this hour W. has had a violent fit of coughing, so as to bring up blood; which agitates and distresses him through all

his endeavours to hide it. What shall we say? This is the hour of trial; the Lord support and strengthen us in it. Retrospections bring anguish; 'press forwards towards the mark and prize.'

"*20th, Sunday morning.* The matin-bells awakened my soul to its most painful regrets, and filled it with an agony of sorrow, which could not at first find relief even in prayer. In the little closet, from whence there is a view of the open sea, and the beatings of the waves against the high rocks at the entrance of this prison, which throws them violently back, and raises the white foam as high as its walls, I first came to my senses, and reflected that I was offending my only Friend and Resource in my misery, and voluntarily shutting from my soul the only consolation it could receive. Pleading for mercy and strength brought peace, and with a cheerful countenance I asked William what we should do for breakfast; the doors were unbarred, and a bottle of milk let down in the entrance of the room—poor Philip fearing to come too near. Little Anna and William ate it with bread, and I walked the floor with a crust and a glass of wine. William could not sit up, his ague came on, and with it my soul's agony; my husband on the cold bricks without fire, shivering and groaning, lifting his dim and sorrowful eyes with a fixed gaze in my face, while his tears ran on his pillow, without one word. Anna rubbed one hand, I the other, till his fever came on. The capitano brought us news that our time was lessened five days; told me to be satisfied with the dispensations of God, &c.; and was answered by such a succession of sobs, that he soon departed. Mr. Filicchi now came to comfort my William, and when he went away, we said as much of our Church-service as William could go through. I then was obliged to lay my head down. * * * After prayers, read my little book of sermons, and became far more happy than I had been wretched.

"*Monday.* Awoke with the same rest and comfort with which I had lain down, gave my William his

warm milk, and began to consider our situation—though so unfavourable to his complaint—as one of the steps in the dispensations of that Almighty will which could alone choose right for us; and therefore set Anna to work, and myself to the dear Scriptures as usual; lying close behind the poor shiverer, to keep him from the ague. Our capitano came with his guards, and put up a very neat bed and curtains sent by Filicchi; and fixed the benches on which Anna and I were to lie.”

From the Messieurs Filicchi Mrs. Seton received every possible alleviation in her desolate and sorrowful imprisonment; for such the time of quarantine literally was. The notices in her journal at this time are most deeply interesting. She saw her husband, “who left his all to seek a milder climate, confined in this place of high and damp walls; exposed to cold and wind, which penetrates to the very bones; without fire, except the kitchen charcoal, which oppresses his breast so much as nearly to convulse him;” and yet her confidence in God was so unshaken, her resignation to His will so complete, that, far from murmuring, most of her expressions are those of praise and thanksgiving. “Little billets of paper pasted on the doors mark how many days different persons have stayed; and the shutter is all over notched 10, 20, 30, 40 days. I do not mark ours, trusting they are marked above. He only knows best.”

“A day of bodily pain, but peace with God.”

“Anna and I sung Advent hymns with a low voice. After all were asleep, I said our church service alone. William had not been able in the day. Found heavenly consolations, forgot prisons, bolts, and sorrows; and would have rejoiced to have sung with St. Paul and Silas.”

“I find my present opportunity a treasure; and my confinement of body a liberty of soul, which I may never again enjoy whilst they are united.”

“So you see, as you know with God for our portion, there is no prison in high walls and bolts; no

sorrow in the soul that waits on Him, though cased with present pains and gloomy prospects. For this freedom I can never be sufficiently thankful, as in my William's case it keeps alive what in his weak state of body would naturally fail; and often when he hears me repeat the psalms of triumph in God, and read of St. Paul's faith in Christ with my whole soul, it so enlivens his spirit that he makes them also his own, and all his sorrows are turned into joy. Oh, well may I love God, well may my whole soul strive to please Him; for what but the pen of an angel can ever express what He has done, and is ever doing for me! While I live, while I have my being, in time and through eternity, let me sing praises to my God."

"Alone! alone? recal the word—my Bible, commentaries, Kempis—visible and continual enjoyment—when I cannot get hours, I take minutes. Invisible! Oh, the company is numberless. Sometimes I feel so assured that the guardian-angel is immediately present, that I look from my book, and can hardly be persuaded I was not touched. 'Poor soul!' John Henry Hobart* would say, 'she will lose her reason in that prison.' But the enjoyments only come when all is quiet, and I have passed an hour or two with king David or the prophet Isaiah. These hours, I often think, I shall hereafter esteem the most precious of my life."

In this blessed state of union with God's will Mrs. Seton stedfastly persevered; and was able to nurse her dying husband day and night with the most heroic fortitude and patience. She little expected he could linger through the period of quarantine, and sometimes even "kissed his pale face to see if it was cold;" but her faith never failed. "The dampness about us," she writes within six days of leaving the lazaretto, "would be thought dangerous for a person in health; and my

* Mr. Hobart, then a minister of the Episcopal Church, and afterwards Bishop of New York, was a man of singular talent and influence, and the friend and spiritual adviser of Mrs. Seton at that time.

William's sufferings—oh! well I know that God is above. Capitano, you need not always point your silent look and finger there; if I thought our condition the providence of *men*, instead of the weeping Magdalen, as you so graciously call me, you would find me a lioness, willing to burn your lazaretto about your ears, if it was possible, that I might carry off my poor prisoner to breathe the air of heaven in some more reasonable place. To keep a poor soul, who comes to your country for his life, thirty days shut up in damp walls, with smoke, and wind from all quarters, blowing even the curtains round his bed (and his bones almost through); and he the shadow of death, trembling if he only stands a few minutes! He is to go to Pisa for his health; this day his prospects are very far from Pisa; but, ah, my heavenly Father! I learn that these contradictory events are permitted and guided by Thy wisdom, which only is light! We are in darkness, and must be thankful that our knowledge is not wanted to perfect Thy work; and also keep in mind that infinite mercy, which, in permitting the sufferings of the perishing body, has provided for our souls so large an opportunity of comfort and nourishment for an eternal life; where we shall assuredly find that all things have worked together for our good, for our sure trust is in Thee."

After a few more "melancholy days of combat with nature's weakness, and the courage of hope which pictured our removal from the lazaretto to Pisa," Mrs. Seton was at length permitted to leave the inhospitable walls which had sheltered her since her arrival in Italy, and with her husband and little girl was conveyed in Mr. Filicchi's carriage to Pisa; though it seemed doubtful whether Mr. Seton would reach the end of his journey alive. In fact, he only lingered a week more, during which time his sufferings were so great that his constant prayer was for "pardon and release;" and on the 27th of December, 1803, Mrs. Seton became a widow amongst strangers and in a foreign land

Yet, so far from being overwhelmed by her situation, it seemed as if her strength and courage rose with the trial. She writes, after herself performing the last duties to her deceased husband, "I felt that I had done all—all that tenderest love and duty could do. My head had not rested for a week; three days and nights the fatigue had been incessant, and one meal in twenty-four hours; still I must work, dress, pack up, and in one hour be in Mr. Filicchi's carriage, and ride fifteen miles to Leghorn. Carlton and our old Louis stayed to watch, and my William was brought in the afternoon, and deposited in the house appointed, in the Protestant burial-ground. Oh, what a day! close his eyes, lay him out, ride a journey, be obliged to see a dozen people in my room till night, and at night crowded with the whole sense of my situation. Oh, my Father and my God! * * * In all this it is not necessary to dwell on the mercy and consoling presence of my dear Lord; for no mortal strength could support what I experienced."

After the knowledge of Mrs. Seton's character which we derive from these passages of her private journal and letters, it can scarcely be necessary to add, that from the very first she had made a most favourable impression upon all who saw her attending her dying husband, and enduring the peculiar trials of those first few weeks in the lazaretto; but when, from the fear of contagion in others, she herself undertook to lay out the corpse, those around her cried out with admiration, "If she were not a heretic, she would be a saint."

The widow and her daughter were now received like dear relations into the house of the Messieurs Filicchi, whose names have been already mentioned as early friends of her husband. These gentlemen were merchants of the highest standing; and besides being devout and fervent Christians, were men of enlightened and talented minds. The elder brother, Mr. Philip Filicchi, was honoured by the special confidence of the Grand Duke of Tuscany

Every thing was done by these generous friends to divert and restore Mrs. Seton's suffering spirit; and a visit was made to Florence, that she might have an opportunity of seeing some of the charms of Italy before returning to her family in America. The churches and the sacred paintings seem alone to have impressed her during this visit. Of the picture of the Descent from the Cross in the Pitti Palace, she says, "It engaged my whole soul; Mary at the foot of it expressed well that the iron had entered into hers; and the shades of death over her agonised countenance so strongly contrasted with the heavenly peace of the dear Redeemer, that it seemed as if His pains had fallen on her."

It will be easily conceived, from the character of Mrs. Seton's friends, and from her own lively and impressionable mind, that some pains were taken during her short stay amongst them to enlighten her on the subject of the Catholic faith. Mr. Filicchi once remarking that there was but one true religion, and without a right faith no one could be acceptable to God, Mrs. Seton replied, "Oh, sir! if there is but one faith, and nobody pleases God without it, where are all the good people who die out of it?" "I don't know," answered her friend; "that depends on what light of faith they have received; but I know where people go *who can know the right faith, if they pray and inquire for it, and yet do neither.*" "That is to say, sir, you want me to pray and inquire, and be of your faith!" said Mrs. Seton, laughing. "Pray and inquire," he added; "that is all I ask of you."

Mr. Anthony Filicchi also wrote to her whilst at Florence, urging this important subject upon her in the following terms: "Your dear William was the early friend of my youth; you are now come in his room; your soul is even dearer to Antonio, and will be so for ever. May the good Almighty God enlighten your and strengthen your heart, to see and follow in the sweet, true way to the eternal blessings.

I shall call for you. I must meet you in Paradise, if it is decreed that the vast plains of the ocean shall soon be betwixt us. Don't discontinue, in the meanwhile, to pray : to knock at the door." They also put books in her hands, and introduced to her a learned priest. For a while Mrs. Seton had no misgivings respecting the soundness of the Protestant faith, and writes as follows to a friend at home: "I am hard pushed by these charitable Romans, who wish that so much goodness should be improved by a conversion; which, to effect, they have now taken the trouble to bring me their best-informed priest, Abbé Plunkett, who is an Irishman; but they find me so willing to hear their enlightened conversation, that consequently, as learned people like to hear themselves best, I have but little to say, and as yet keep friends with all, as the best comment on my profession." But it was impossible that, with such edifying examples before her eyes, and such able arguments addressed to her understanding, she should not at last begin to doubt her perfect security: and with the first misgiving arose a fervent prayer to God that, if not yet in the right way, she might be graciously led into it. This became her daily petition; nor need it be told how surely, in answer to this heartfelt and humble prayer, she was gradually impressed by the truths of Catholicity, and yielded up her soul to this Divine influence long before she was conscious that she had swerved from Protestant belief. Having once accompanied her friends to hear Mass in the church of Montenero, a young Englishman who was present observed to her at the very moment of the elevation, "This is what they call their Real Presence!" "My very heart," says Mrs. Seton, "trembled with pain and sorrow for his unfeeling interruption of their sacred adoration; for all around was dead silence, and many were prostrated. Involuntarily I bent from him to the pavement, and thought secretly on the words of St. Paul with starting tears, 'They discern not the Lord's Body;' and the next thought was, how should they eat

and drink their own damnation for not discerning It, if indeed It's not there?"

Mrs. Seton, however, was not yet convinced of the claims of the Catholic Church upon her obedience; and on the 3d of February, 1804, she re-embarked with her daughter Anna for their native country; but a storm driving back the vessel, and the child being suddenly attacked by scarlet fever, they were once more welcomed to the hospitable house of Mr. Anthony Filicchi, and pressed to remain there until they should again be able to take their departure. After Anna had recovered, her mother was seized by the same illness; and during all this time the most affectionate care was lavished upon them by their Italian friends. "Oh, the patience," exclaims Mrs. Seton, "and more than human kindness of these dear Filicchis for us! you would say it was our Saviour Himself they received in His poor and sick strangers."

Thus brought again within the influence of Catholic piety and charity, Mrs. Seton availed herself of every opportunity of becoming better acquainted with the doctrines of that faith which brought forth such pleasant fruits; and every day felt herself more powerfully drawn towards it. "How happy we should be," she writes to a friend, "if we believed what these dear souls believe—that they possess God in the Sacrament, and that He remains in their churches, and is carried to them when they are sick! When they carry the Blessed Sacrament under my window, while I feel the full loneliness and sadness of my case, I cannot stop my tears at the thought. My God, how happy I should be, now so far away from all so dear, if I could find You in the church as they do (for there is a chapel in the very house of Mr. Filicchi). How many things I would say to You of the sorrows of my heart, and the sins of my life! The other day, in a moment of excessive distress, I fell on my knees, without thinking, when the Blessed Sacrament passed by, and cried in an agony to God to bless me, if He was there; that my whole soul desired only

Him. A little prayer-book of Mr. Filicchi's was on the table, and I opened a little prayer of St. Bernard to the Blessed Virgin, begging her to be our Mother; and I said it to her with such a certainty that God would refuse nothing to His Mother, and that she could not help pitying and loving the poor souls He died for, that I felt really I had a mother; which you know my foolish heart so often lamented in early days. From the first remembrance of infancy, I have always looked, in all the plays of childhood and wildness of youth, to the clouds for my mother; and at that moment it seemed as if I had found more than her, even in tenderness and pity of a mother. So I cried myself to sleep on her heart."

At another time, writing to the same relation, she thus shows the gradual advance of her mind to a knowledge of the truth: "This evening, standing by the window, the moon shining full on Filicchi's countenance, he raised his eyes to heaven, and showed me how to make the sign of the cross. Dearest Rebecca, I was cold with the awful impression the first making of it gave me. The sign of the cross of Christ on me! Deeper thoughts came with it of I know not what earnest desires to be closely united with Him who died on it—of that last day when He is to bear it in triumph. * * * All the Catholic religion is full of these meanings, which interest me so. Why, Rebecca, they believe all we do and suffer, if we offer it for our sins, serves to expiate them. You may remember, when I asked Mr. Hobart what was meant by fasting in our prayer-book, as I found myself on Ash-Wednesday morning saying so foolishly to God, 'I turr to You in fasting, weeping, and mourning,' and I had come to church with a hearty breakfast of buck-wheat cakes and coffee, and full of life and spirits, with little thought of my sins; you may remember what he said about its being old customs, &c. Well, the dear Mrs. Filicchi I am with never eats, this season of Lent, till after the clock strikes three. Then the family assemble, and she says she offers her weakness and pain of

fasting for her sins, united with her Saviour's sufferings. I like that very much; but what I like better, dearest Rebecca,—only think what a comfort, they go to Mass here every morning. Ah! how often you and I used to give the sigh, and you would press your arm in mine of a Sunday morning, and say, 'no more until next Sunday,' as we turned from the church-door, which closed upon us (unless a prayer-day was given out in the week). Well, here they go to church at four every morning if they please. And you know how we were laughed at for running from one church to another on Sacrament Sundays, that we might receive as often as we could; well, here people that love God, and lead a regular life, can go (though many do not do it, yet they *can* go) every day. Oh, I don't know how any one *can* have any trouble in this world, who believes all these dear souls believe. If I don't believe it, it shall not be for want of praying. Why, they must be as happy as angels, almost."

"Such," adds her biographer, "was the lofty and just appreciation which Mrs. Seton formed of Catholic truth;" and, we may add, would that all Catholics set as high a value upon these blessed privileges of their inheritance as did this good soul, to whom as yet they had not been given!

During the latter part of her stay in Leghorn, Mrs. Seton frequently visited the sacred places, and, joining with devotion in the services of the Church, would pour forth her soul in prayer. Indeed, had not her return to America been hastened as much as possible through her anxiety to rejoin her bereaved family at home, she would probably have renounced Protestantism before leaving Italy. However, the delay, although it entailed severe mental conflict and suffering for nearly a year afterwards, served only to prove still more triumphantly the power of the faith she had received, and her own fidelity to the graces bestowed.

CHAPTER III.

LEAVING with tears the grave of her beloved husband, she set forth at length on the 8th of April, with a heart yearning with desire after her children at home. Mr Anthony Filicchi, who had long been wishing for matters of business to visit America, was decided by Mrs. Seton's lonely situation to accompany her on the voyage. This was the greatest comfort to her; for the friendship between them was of no common order. "The 8th of April," she writes in her journal, "at half-past four in the morning, my dearest brother came to my room to awaken my soul to all its dearest hopes and expectations. The heaven was bright with stars, the wind fair, and the *Pianigo's* signal expected to call us on board; meanwhile the tolling of the bell called us to Mass, and in a few minutes we were prostrate in the presence of God. Oh, my soul, how solemn was that offering—for a blessing on our voyage—for my dear ones, my sisters, and all so dear to me—and, more than all, for the souls of my dear husband and father; earnestly our desires ascended with the blessed Sacrifice, that they might find acceptance through Him who gave Himself for us; earnestly we desired to be united with Him, and would gladly encounter all the sorrows before us to be partakers of that Blessed Body and Blood! Oh, my God, pity and spare me! * * * Filicchi's last blessing to me was as his whole conduct had been,—that of the truest friend. Oh, Filicchi, you shall not *witness against me*. May God bless you for ever; and may you shine as the 'stars in glory,' for what you have done for me. * * * Most dear Seton, where are you now? I lose sight of the shore that contains your dear ashes, and your soul is in that region of immensity where I cannot find you. My Father and my God! And yet I must always love to retrospect Thy wonderful dispensations: to be sent as

many thousand miles on so hopeless an errand; to be constantly supported and accompanied by Thy consoling mercy, through scenes of trial which nature alone must have sunk under; to be brought to the light of Thy truth, notwithstanding every affection of my heart and power of my will was opposed to it; to be succoured and cherished by the tenderest friendship, while separated and far from those that I loved. My Father and my God, while I live, let me praise; while I have my being, let me serve and adore Thee."

During the voyage, which lasted fifty-six days, Mrs. Seton employed her time in uniting as far as possible with Mr. A. Filicchi in the observances of the Church, in reading the lives of the Saints, and in acquainting herself still further with Catholic doctrine by frequent conversation with her friend. She had need of strength for the storm of opposition that awaited her; and her heart sank, even in the midst of its joyful anticipations at returning home, at the separation that her religious convictions would bring about between herself and her hitherto deeply revered pastor, the Rev. J. H. Hobart. She says in her journal, looking forward to this, "Still, if you will not be my brother, if your dear friendship and esteem must be the price of my fidelity to what I believe to be the truth, I cannot doubt the mercy of God, who, by depriving me of my dearest tie on earth, will certainly draw me nearer to Him; and this I feel confidently from the experience of the past, and the truth of His promise, which can never fail."

Mrs. Seton had the happiness of finding all her little ones in perfect health; but a severe trial awaited her in the death of Miss Rebecca Seton, her sister-in-law and most dear companion and friend, who only survived a few weeks after their re-union. In losing her, Mrs. Seton seemed to lose the last tie that bound her to her religious life as a Protestant. Father, husband, friend, and worldly prosperity, had now shifted from her one by one, but the death of this friend, the cherished companion of all her visits of charity and devotion, of her prayers and

readings, and the sympathising recipient of her heart's most inward aspirations after God, must have broken the bond that was most likely to have held her soul ensnared to all its old associations and prejudices. Mrs. Seton thus speaks of her sister-in-law: "She who had been the dear companion of all the pains and all the comforts, of songs of praise and notes of sorrow, the dear, faithful, tender friend of my soul through every varied scene of many years of trial, gone; only the shadow remaining, and that in a few days must pass away! The hour of plenty and comfort, the society of sisters united by prayers and Divine affections, the evening hymns, the daily readings, the sweet contemplations, the service of holydays together, the kiss of peace, the widows' visits,—all, all gone for ever! And is poverty and sorrow the only exchange? My husband, my sister, my home, my comforts—poverty and sorrow. Well, with God's blessing, you too shall be changed into dearest friends. To the world you show your outward garments; but through them you discover to my soul the palm of victory, the triumph of faith, and the sweet footsteps of my Redeemer, leading direct to His kingdom; then let me gently meet you, be received in your bosom, and be daily conducted by your counsels through the remainder of my destined journey. I know that many Divine graces accompany your faith, and change the stings of penance for ease of conscience, and the solitude of the desert for the society of angels." Mrs. Seton, being thus fully engaged with her dying sister immediately on her return from Italy, could not help contrasting painfully the difference between the death-bed of a Protestant and one who is fortified by all the Sacraments of the Church. Yet, after the trial was over, her mind became unutterably harassed by doubts and temptations respecting her future religious profession. On leaving Leghorn, she had been furnished by Mr. Filicchi with a letter of introduction to the Right Rev. Dr. Carroll, then Catholic Bishop of Baltimore; but, unfortunately, this letter was not at once

delivered; and, following the well-meant advice of Mr. Filicchi to acquaint her pastor and friends with her change of principles, such a storm of opposition came down upon her, that for a long time her mind was divided and bewildered, and tempted to stray back altogether from the newly-found path of truth. Mr. Hobart, in particular, whose talents and religious zeal were very great, and for whom her own great partiality pleaded strongly, left no argument untried that could be brought to bear upon the subject. And though constant personal communication with Mr. Anthony Filicchi at New York, and epistolary correspondence with his brother at Leghorn, kept up the warfare on the other side, yet for many months she could not see her way clearly to renounce for ever the creed in which she had been brought up. But, accustomed as she was almost incessantly to lay every trouble before God and implore His Divine guidance, the germ of faith could not be stifled within her; and perhaps it became only more firmly rooted during this time of suffering. The brothers Filicchi were unwearied in teaching, counselling, and confirming her wavering mind. The letters of Philip, in particular, are models of wisdom, piety, and charity; and as the letters of a layman engaged in active mercantile pursuits, they bear the marks of no common attainments. He much regretted that Mrs. Seton had not entered the Catholic Church whilst in Italy, and under the full force of convictions. However, though unable to act decidedly, Mrs. Seton's mind seemed still more unable to let go the truths it had already embraced. She thus describes her own singular state: "On arriving at home (from Italy) I was assailed on the subject of religion by the clergy, who talked of antichrist, idolatry, and urged objections in torrents; which, though not capable of changing the opinions I had adopted, have terrified me enough to keep me in a state of hesitation; and I am thus in the hands of God, praying night and day for His Divine light, which can alone direct me aright. I

instruct my children in the Catholic religion, without taking any decided step; my heart is in that faith, and it is my greatest comfort to station myself in imagination in a Catholic Church."

The coldness of many, indeed most of her Protestant friends, who were scandalised at her venturing to entertain any doubts on the subject of religion, was a great trial to her warm and still bleeding heart; but perhaps a still greater temptation for her lay in the affectionate appeals continually made to her by Mr. Hobart.

The very fact of being in a state of doubt, of course, made Mrs. Seton a sort of common prey for proselytisers of all denominations, which she herself describes in a lively manner. "I had," she says, "a most affectionate note from Mr. Hobart to-day, asking me how I could ever think of leaving the Church in which I was baptised. But, though whatever he says has the weight of my partiality for him, as well as the respect it seems to me I could scarcely have for any one else, yet that question made me smile; for it is like saying that wherever a child is born, and wherever its parents place it, there it will find the truth; and he does not hear the droll invitations made me every day since I am in my little new home, and old friends come to see me: for it has already happened that one of the most excellent women I ever knew, who is of the Church of Scotland, finding me unsettled about the great object of a true faith, said to me: 'Oh do, dear soul, come and hear our J. Mason, and I am sure you will join us. A little after came one whom I loved for the purest and most innocent manners, of the Society of Quakers (to which I have been always attached); she coaxed me too with artless persuasion: 'Betsey, I tell thee, thee had better come with us.' And my faithful old friend of the Anabaptist meeting, Mrs. T——, says, with tears in her eyes, 'Oh, could you be regenerated; could you know our experiences, and enjoy with us our heavenly banquet.' And my good old Mary, the Methe

dist, groans and contemplates, as she calls it, over my soul, so misled because I have got no convictions. But oh, my Father and my God. all that will not do for me. Your word is truth, and without contradiction, wherever it is. One faith, one hope, one baptism, I look for, wherever it is; and I often think my sins, my miseries, hide the light: yet I will cling and hold to my God to the last gasp, begging for that light; and never change until I find it."

Again, she thus writes to Mrs. A. Filicchi in September: "Your Antonio would not have been well pleased to see me in St. Paul's (Protestant Episcopal) Church to-day; but peace and persuasion about proprieties, &c. over-prevalled: yet I got in a side pew, which turned my face towards the Catholic Church in the next street, and found myself twenty times speaking to the Blessed Sacrament *there*, instead of looking at the naked altar where I was, or minding the routine of prayers. Tears plenty, and sighs as silent and deep as when I first entered your blessed Church of the Annunciation in Florence—all turning to the one only desire, to see the way most pleasing to my God, whichever that way is. * * * I can only say, I do long and desire to worship our God in truth; and if I had never met you Catholics, and yet should have read the books Mr. Hobart has brought me, they would have in themselves brought a thousand uncertainties and doubts to my mind; and these soften my heart so much before God, in the certainty how much He must pity me, knowing as He does the whole and sole bent of my soul is to please Him only, and get close to Him in this life and in the next, that in the midnight hour, believe me, I often look up at the walls through the tears and distress that overpower me, expecting rather to see His finger writing on the wall for my relief, than that He will forsake or abandon so poor a creature."

Mrs. Seton made one final effort to find comfort in that form of worship where she had been so long accustomed to seek it "Would you believe it, Ama-

bilias; in a desperation of heart I went last Sunday to St. George's (Protestant Episcopal) Church; the wants and necessities of my soul were so pressing that I looked straight up to God, and I told Him, since I cannot see the way to please You, whom alone I wish to please, every thing is indifferent to me; and until You do show me the way You mean me to walk in, I will trudge on in the path You suffered me to be born in, and go even to the very Sacrament where I once used to find You. So away I went, my old Mary happy to take care of the children for me once more until I came back; but if I left the house a Protestant, I returned to it a Catholic, I think; since I determined to go no more to the Protestants, being much more troubled than ever I thought I could be whilst I remembered God is my God. But so it was, that in the bowing of my heart before the bishop to receive his absolution, which is given publicly and universally to all in the church, I had not the least faith in his prayers, and looked for an apostolic loosing from my sins, which, by the books Mr. Hobart had given me to read, I find they do not claim or admit; thus trembling I went to communion, half dead with the inward struggle; when they said 'the body and blood of Christ,'—oh, Amabilia, no words can express my trial. I took the *Daily Exercise* of good Abbé Plunkett, to read the prayers after communion; but finding every word addressed to our dear Saviour as really present, I became half crazy, and for the first time could not bear the sweet caresses of the darlings, nor bless their little dinner. Oh, my God, that day! but it finished calmly at last, abandoning all to God, and a renewed confidence in the Blessed Virgin; whose mild and peaceful look reproached my bold excesses, and reminded me to fix my heart above with better hopes."

So tortured was the mind of Mrs. Seton at this time, that she had even thought in despair of embracing no particular form of Christianity until the hour of death; but taking up a sermon of Bourdaloue on the Feast of

the Epiphany, and meeting with the following observations, in allusion to the inquiry "Where is He who is born king of the Jews?" that when we no longer discern the star of faith, we must seek it where alone it is to be found, among the depositories of the Divine word, the pastors of the Church, she was, by the blessing of God, so deeply impressed by the suggestion, that she immediately turned again to the Catholic books which had originally so forcibly attracted her; and being unable to obtain an interview with the priest in her own neighbourhood, wrote at once to solicit directions from the Rev. John Cheverus, at Boston.

In vain did her Protestant friends use all the common arguments to deter her. Worldly considerations were nothing to her where her soul was concerned. "The Catholics of New York were represented to me," she tells a friend at this time, "as the offscourings of the people," and the congregation as "a public nuisance; but," she adds, "that troubles not me. The congregations of a city may be very shabby, yet very pleasing to God; or very bad people among them, yet that cannot hurt the *faith*, as I take it. And should the priest himself deserve no more respect than is here allowed him, his ministry of the Sacraments would be the same to me, if I ever shall receive them. I seek but God and His Church; and expect to find my peace in them, not in the people."

Mrs. Seton then put herself in correspondence with the Rev. John Cheverus; and this step was of the greatest service to her. His timely counsels and the wise advice of Bishop Carroll, at length, under God, dispelled the clouds from her soul, and determined her to delay no longer seeking admission to the Catholic Church. These are her own words on making this important decision, and are the last extract we shall make from her pen as a Protestant: "Now they tell me, take care; I am a mother, and my children I must answer for in judgment, whatever faith I lead them to. That being so, and I so unconscious; for I little thought,

till told by Mr. Hobart, that their faith could be so full of consequence to them and me, I will go peaceably and firmly to the Catholic Church; for if faith is so important to our salvation, I will seek it where true faith first began; seek it amongst those who received it from God Himself. The controversies I am quite incapable of deciding; and as the strictest Protestant allows salvation to a good Catholic, to the Catholics I will go, and try to be a good one. May God accept my intentions, and pity me. As to supposing the word of our Lord has failed, and that He suffered His first foundation to be built on by antichrist, I cannot stop on that without stopping on every other word of our Lord, and being tempted to be no Christian at all; for, if the first Church became antichrist, and the second holds her rights from it, then I should be afraid both might be antichrist, and I make my way to the bottomless pit by following either. Come, then, my little ones, we will go to judgment together, and present our Lord His own words; and if He says, 'You fools, I did not mean that,' we will say, 'Since You said You would be *always*, even to the end of ages, with this Church You built with Your Blood, if You ever left it, it is Your word which misled us; therefore please to pardon Your poor fools, for Your own word's sake.'

On Ash-Wednesday then, March 14, 1805, Mrs. Seton presented herself for acceptance in the church of St. Peter's, New York. "How the heart," she says, "died away, as it were in silence, before the little tabernacle and the large crucifixion over it! Ah, my God, here let me rest;—and down the head on the bosom, and the knees on the bench." After Mass she was received into the Church by the Rev. Matthew O'Brien, in the presence of her most true friend, Mr. Anthony Filicchi. What his feelings must have been, at this happy termination to all his anxieties on her account, can be well imagined. Less easily hers as she returned home, "light at heart, and cool of head, the first time these many long months; but not without begging our Lord

to wrap my heart deep in that opened Side, so well described in the beautiful crucifixion; or lock it up in His little tabernacle, where I shall now rest for ever. Oh, the endearments of this day with the children, and the play of the heart with God, while keeping up their little farces with them." What a contrast to the torturing anxieties of the last twelve months; and, in particular, to the trouble and disappointment she experienced in partaking of the Lord's Supper, in the Protestant church, when, "for the first time in her life, she could not bear the sweet caresses of her darling children, nor bless their dinner!"

The following extracts from her journal of this time all breathe the same happy spirit of peace and contentment: "So delighted now to prepare for this good confession, which, bad as I am, I would be ready to make on the house-top, to insure the good absolution I hope for after it, and then to set out a new life, a new existence itself: no great difficulty for me to be ready for it; for truly my life has been well culled over in bitterness of soul, three months of sorrow past." "It is done, easy enough. The kindest confessor is this Mr. O'Brien, with the compassion and yet firmness in this work of mercy which I would have expected from my Lord Himself. Our Lord Himself I saw alone in him, both in his and my part in this venerable Sacrament; for, oh! how awful those words of unloosing after a thirty years' bondage. I felt as if my chains fell, as those of St. Peter, at the touch of the Divine messenger."

"My God! what new scenes for my soul! Annunciation Day I shall be made one with Him, who said, 'Unless you eat My flesh, and drink My blood, you can have no part with Me.' I count the days and hours; yet a few more of hope and expectation, and then—How bright the sun, these morning walks of preparation! Deep snow or smooth ice, all to me the same—I see nothing but the little bright cross on St. Peter's steeple."

"*25th March.*—At last, God is mine, and I am His. Now let all go its round. I have received Him. The awful impressions of the evening before, Jesus, of not having done all to prepare; and yet even the transports of confidence and hope in His goodness. My God! to the last breath of life will I not remember this night of watching for morning dawn, the fearful beating heart, so pressing to be gone; the long walk to town, but every step counted nearer that street; then nearer that tabernacle; then nearer the moment He would enter the poor, poor little dwelling so all His own. And when He did, the first thought I remember was, 'Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered;' for it seemed to me my King had come to take His throne; and instead of the humble, tender welcome I had expected to give Him, it was but a triumph of joy and gladness, that the deliverer was come, and my defence, and shield, and strength, and salvation made mine, for this world and the next. Now, then, all the recesses of my heart found their fling, and it danced with more fervour—no, I must not say that; but perhaps almost with as much, as the royal psalmist before his ark; for I was far richer than he, and more honoured than he ever could be. Now the point is for the fruits. So far, truly, I feel all the powers of my soul held fast by Him, who came with so much majesty to take possession of His little poor kingdom."

CHAPTER IV.

BEHOLD Mrs. Seton, then, at length safely housed within the ark towards which her soul had for so long unconsciously yearned. After all the difficulties and doubts she had been passing through, she was well prepared to rejoice in the possession of peace on which she had now entered; not peace undisturbed, but still

peace that could not be removed. She was now, as she herself hastened to inform the Rev. J. Cheverus whose advice had so materially aided her conversion, "a poor burdened creature, weighed down with sins and sorrows, receiving an immediate transition to life, liberty, and rest." To the close of her life Mrs. Seton maintained a correspondence with this worthy priest; and his sympathy and counsel, with that of Bishop Carroll, the Rev. Dr. Matignon, and other distinguished clergymen, of whom it was remarked that "their appearance, their deportment, their learning, are acknowledged almost with enthusiasm by most of the Protestants themselves," was a powerful support to her under the new trials she was now called upon to endure, in the coldness, or rather opposition, of many of her former friends. At that time it was considered a degradation to embrace the Catholic faith, just as it is by many persons in our own country even at the present day; and the estrangement of her family on this account left Mrs. Seton to meet almost alone the exigencies in which the embarrassed state of her husband's affairs at the time of his death had involved her. Had she remained a Protestant, all due assistance would have been given, and a large fortune might have been hers; but now, except for the munificent aid of Mr. Filicchi, she was left dependent on her own exertions. Nothing that the most generous friendship could prompt was wanting on the part of this noble man. He would gladly have provided a house for her in Italy; and his agents in New York were constantly directed to supply her with whatever money she might call on them for; and her two sons, one nine and the other seven years old, were placed by him for education in a college at Georgetown. "To relieve her wants," he told her, "was the pride of his soul, and his best passport for his last journey."

Mrs. Seton, however, was very properly anxious to exert herself for the benefit of her young family; and she therefore opened a boarding-house for some of the boys who attended a school in the city. Even in this

change she found the highest consolation, knowing that it was brought about by her obedience to the will of God; and, after attending Mass, she went through her round of daily duties with the greatest cheerfulness and satisfaction. She still kept up the practice of committing to paper the secrets of her heart; and it is difficult to select from this treasury of devotion one passage more worthy than another of shadowing forth this pure, and humble, and loving heart. Her constant prayer at this time is, that the love of God may be supreme within her. "Imagining the corrupted heart in Thy hand, it begged Thee with all its strength to cut, pare, and remove from it (whatever anguish it must undergo) whatever prevented the entrance of Thy love. Again it repeats the supplication, and begs it as Thy greatest mercy; cut to the centre, tear up every root, let it bleed, let it suffer any thing, every thing, only fit it for Thyself, place only Thy love there, and let humility keep sentinel; and what shall I fear? What is pain, sorrow, poverty, reproach? Blessed Lord! they all were once Thy inmates, Thy chosen companions; and can I reject them as enemies, and fly from the friends You send to bring me to Your kingdom?" Even in the midst of the petty calls upon her attention, which were now incessant, this one idea was ever present within, "Who can bind the soul which God sets free? It sprung to Him fifty times an hour. Scarcely an hour without being turned to Him; while the voice and eyes were answering down below, sweet! sweet!"

On the 26th of May, 1806, Mrs. Seton was confirmed by Bishop Carroll in St. Peter's Church, New York; and soon after this event she was called upon to part from her invaluable friend, Mr. A. Filicchi, who was returning to his native country. No words can express all that Mrs. Seton owed to this gentleman, who had left his own family to accompany her home in her bereavement; who had placed at her disposal his means, his time, and his unfailing sympathy; who had labored unceasingly to bring her within the fold of the

true Church, and under the bright example of whose Christian piety and charity she had first learned to seek after this saving refuge. Mrs. Seton always called him *brother*; and no brother could have been nearer and dearer to a sister's heart than he was to hers. Nor was it without deep feeling that he too could bid farewell to one to whom he had been so eminently useful. We read that he considered "the interest which he had taken in the welfare of her and her family as the secret of the many favours he had received from heaven." When on his way home, being providentially rescued from very imminent danger "on the dreadful summit of Mount Ceniz," he thus writes to Mrs. Seton: "It was on Monday night, the 8th of December, the day of the festival of our Blessed Lady's Conception. Early in that morning, they (the other passengers in the *diligence*) had all laughed at my going to Mass; but fear drew afterwards from their lips, against their will, the awful acknowledgment of their forsaken principles of religion. I looked immediately to you as my principal intercessor; and you must have had certainly a great share in my deliverance. What wonder, then, in my readiness to be serviceable to you? Through your good example they find me now a better Christian than I was, and through you my mercantile concerns are blessed by God with an uninterrupted success. I shall not, therefore, be so foolish as to desert your cause. Pray only our Divine Redeemer to extend His mercy towards me for the most important welfare in our next life. If I have been happy enough to be the instrument of introducing you to the gates of the true Church of Christ here below, keep me fast by you when called upstairs: we must enter together into heaven. Amen."

There was one amongst Mrs. Seton's near connections who by no means shared in the general feeling of hostility with which she was now regarded. This was Miss Cecilia Seton, her youngest sister-in-law. Under fourteen years of age, beautiful, devout, and most warmly attached to her proscribed relative, Mrs.

Seton cherished the earnest hope that this sister might one day be partaker of the true faith, and availed herself of the frequent opportunities afforded by a severe illness to bring the subject before her young patient.

When raised from her sick bed, Miss C. Seton devoted herself unhesitatingly to find out the truth, and finally resolved, in spite of the most furious opposition, on becoming a Catholic. It was in vain that every means were employed that bigotry and misguided zeal could suggest. She was threatened with all sorts of possible and impossible evils, and even kept in close confinement for several days; but the grace of God carried her unwavering through every opposition, and she was received into the Church, June 20th, 1806. The immediate consequences of this step were her dismissal from home without the least provision, and a positive prohibition to enter the houses of any of her relations, or to associate with their families. The youngest, and hitherto the favourite at home, this was a severe trial to the youthful novice; but she was welcomed as a gift from God by Mrs. Seton, who gladly offered her a home.

This, however, was the occasion of renewed persecutions towards Mrs. Seton; and many who had hitherto kept up some outward resemblance of courtesy, now forbade their children to hold the slightest intercourse with her. Even the Protestant Bishop Moore and Mr. Hobart, her former friends and pastors, took the same hostile part, and warned all who had hitherto aided her in her establishment to avoid having any thing to do with so dangerous a person. In consequence of this state of things, her circumstances in a worldly point of view became most seriously compromised; yet still her soul retained its peace, and her mind dwelt rather on the consolations received from Catholic friends than the injuries inflicted by others. "Upon my word," she writes pleasantly to Mr. A. Filicchi, "it is very pleasant to have the name of being persecuted, and yet enjoy the sweetest favours; to be poor and wretched,

and yet he rich and happy; neglected and forsaken, yet cherished and tenderly indulged by God's most favoured servants and friends. If now your sister did not wear her most cheerful and contented countenance, she would be indeed a hypocrite. 'Rejoice in the Lord always.' Rejoice, rejoice."

Living under the same roof with her exemplary sister-in-law, Miss Cecilia Seton followed closely in her footsteps, and became day by day a brighter and purer witness of the beauty of that faith she had embraced. So remarkably was this the case, that she soon won back the affection of some who had turned from her in such blind prejudice. For meeting with some of her relations at the death-bed of a mutual friend, they were so deeply touched by the sweetness and piety of the young convert that they invited her to return amongst them. Mrs. Seton, however,—certainly from no deficiency on her own part, but perhaps as being considered a more dangerous character—was not permitted to regain the favour she had lost. But, except so far as worldly circumstances were concerned,—which in themselves affected her not,—this was of little moment to her; for she was now increasingly occupied with her children, who had been, of course, received with her into the Church; and we are told, "nothing can surpass the admirable tact with which Mrs. Seton conciliated their warm affection, and directed her influence over them to the glory of God and their personal sanctification." The following little letter, written to her eldest daughter, then ten years old, is a pleasing specimen of her affectionate care for the best interests of these dear children:

"My darling daughter,—You must not be uneasy at not seeing me either yesterday or to-day. To-morrow I hope to hold you to my heart, which prays for you incessantly, that God may give you grace to use well the precious hours of this week. And I repeat, you have it in your power to make me the happiest of

mothers, and to be my sweet comfort through every sorrow, or to occasion the heaviest affliction to my poor soul that it can meet with in this world. And as your example will have the greatest influence on your dear little sisters also, and you do not know how soon you may be in the place of their mother to them, your doing your duty faithfully is of the greatest consequence, besides what you owe to God and your own soul. Pray Him, supplicate Him, to make you His own. Remember that Mr. Hurley is now in the place of God to you. Receive his instructions as from heaven; as no doubt your dear Saviour has appointed them as the means of bringing you there."

Besides placing her two sons in the college at Georgetown, with the hope of their going ultimately to that of Montreal, Mr. Anthony Filicchi had encouraged Mrs. Seton to hope that she and her daughters might be admitted to a convent in the same place, where her children would be trained carefully in the principles of the faith, and she herself employ her talents as a teacher. This was a prospect, on the thoughts of which Mrs. Seton loved to indulge; but it was brought about much sooner than she expected, by her introduction to the Rev. William V. Dubourg, President and Founder of St. Mary's College in Baltimore. Even before he became acquainted with Mrs. Seton, he was struck by her unusual fervour of devotion during an accidental visit to New York, where he celebrated Mass; and afterwards, learning her wish to enter some conventual establishment with her children, he endeavoured to turn her thoughts from Canada, and induce her to remain in the United States with the same intention. "Come to us, Mrs. Seton," were his words; "we will assist you in forming a plan of life which, while it will forward your views of contributing to the support of your children, will shelter them from the dangers to which they are exposed among their Protestant connections, and also afford you much more

consolation in the exercise of your faith than you have yet enjoyed. We also wish to form a small school for the promotion of religious instruction, for those children whose parents are interested in that point." "You may be sure," says Mrs. Seton, "I objected only want of talents; to which he replied, 'We want example more than talents.'" Mr. Dubourg, who was a man of singular enterprise and penetration, had immediately seen that Mrs. Seton was capable of serving the cause of religion in no ordinary degree; and though her own humble estimate of herself made her wonder at the prospect opening before her, yet it was so congenial to her highest wishes, and offered so many advantages for her beloved children (for Mr. Dubourg had proposed receiving her two sons, free of expense, within St. Mary's College), that she did not hesitate to lay the matter at once before Bishop Carroll, Dr. Matignon, and Mr. Cheverus, as friends and counsellors without whose advice she dared not act. They were unanimously in favour of the scheme, and Dr. Matignon said, almost in the spirit of prophecy, when alluding to her former idea of going to Canada, "*You are destined, I think, for some great good in the United States, and here you should remain in preference to any other location.*" Other circumstances at this time contributed to determine Mrs. Seton to enter upon this new sphere of action; she could not realise enough for the maintenance of her family from the boarding-house she had undertaken, nor was the society of the boys at all beneficial to her own children. Her Protestant friends also highly approved of the Baltimore scheme, observing that it was an excellent project, because "her principles excluded her from the confidence of the inhabitants of New York." Mrs. Seton therefore resolved on leaving her native city; and her sister-in-law, Miss C. Seton, determined on accompanying her.

Mr. Dubourg's plan was that they should take a small house, where, with her own family and a few boarders, she might begin the work of general educa-

tion "in subservience to pious instruction," with the hope that in time, if it was God's will to prosper the undertaking and give her and her companion "a relish for their functions," it might be gradually consolidated into a permanent institution.

On the 9th of June, 1808, Mrs. Seton embarked with her three daughters for Baltimore; and her two sons being brought from Georgetown, to be under Mr. Dubourg's care at St. Mary's College, she had once more all her children under her own immediate superintendence. This was no slight alleviation to the feelings that must have been awakened in her heart by finding herself thrust out, as it were, and unregretted, from her native city, and the companionship of her own family and all the friends of her early life. She was going to a new scene and sphere of action, amongst strangers; and that society of which she had been for so long the cherished ornament, now triumphed over her departure. Yet the only reflections which her unflinching confidence in God inspired, on the eve of her arrival at Baltimore, were expressed in the following words: "To-morrow do I go among strangers? No. Has an anxious thought or fear passed my mind? No. Can I be disappointed? No. Our sweet sacrifice will re-unite my soul with all who offer it. Doubt and fear will fly from the breast inhabited by Him. There can be no disappointment, where the soul's only desire and expectation is to meet His adored will and fulfil it."

Mrs. Seton reached Baltimore on the Feast of Corpus Christi; and in the services of that day, and the affectionate greeting which followed, from a large circle of new friends already prepared to love her, she lost at once all sense of loneliness.

Colonel Howard, amongst others who soon after called to welcome her amongst them, a very wealthy man, and acquainted with her family, pressed her earnestly to take up her abode in his own spacious house, and allow him to bring up her children with his own. This generous proposal was fully appreciated,

but of course declined; for, as she assured Colonel Howard, she "had not left the world for the purpose of entering it again."

It is scarcely necessary to say, that Mrs. Seton had not left New York without informing the Messrs. Filicchi of her intended plans. And as soon as she was settled in her new home, and the design which Mr. Dubourg had in proposing her removal was a little matured, she wrote again, frankly asking what amount of aid she might hope to receive from them, in the event of its being advisable to provide by building, &c. for a permanent institution. Her generous friend, Antonio, who was at this time contributing largely to her own support, responded gladly to this new appeal, bidding her draw at once on his agents for 1000 dollars or more if needful; adding, "your prayers have so much bettered our mercantile importance here below, that, in spite of all the embargoes, political and commercial troubles, which have caused and will cause the utter ruin of many, we possess greater means now than before, thanks to God, with the same unalterable good will." This plan, however, was not destined to be carried out; at least not in the way which was then contemplated. Mrs. Seton's view was to begin by opening a boarding-school for young ladies, leaving to time and the will of God that which she had already very earnestly at heart, the formation of a society specially consecrated to religion. She had no difficulty in obtaining the required number of pupils; and as they lived literally beneath the shadow of the Church, and she enjoyed at this time singular religious privileges, and the frequent society of many distinguished clergymen, particularly of Bishop Carroll, she writes in a transport of joy at the blessing of her lot: "Every morning at communion, living in the very wounds of our dearest Lord, seeing only His representatives, and receiving their benedictions continually."

It was her only wish that her young sister-in-law, Miss Cecilia Seton, would join her. But it had been

thought advisable that this lady should remain for the present in New York, with a brother upon whom she was entirely dependent. Left in the midst of those who had been so hostile to her change of religion, she had many trials to endure; but by unflinching firmness, and the strictest perseverance in attending all her religious duties, she became daily a more fervent Catholic, and cherished the hope of one day devoting herself in a special manner to the service of God. Another sister, Harriet, who was also warmly attached to Mrs. Seton, had inexpressible longings to fly to that happy retirement which she so eloquently painted in her letters from Baltimore. This lady was "the belle of New York," living in the midst of fashionable society, engaged to a step-brother of Mrs. Seton's (of course a Protestant); and, on account of some preference she had already shown for the Catholic faith, was closely watched by her family. In a letter to her sister-in-law, she writes thus: "Where is it you could go, my beloved sister, without meeting with kindness and affection? They must, indeed, be unenviable beings, who know you without loving you. Your description is delightful. Every thought, every hope, flies towards the happy spot you have pictured. Oh, that I may one day be there, but not in my present state, to be happy! Let me enjoy the precious privilege of serving God in your blessed faith. What comfort can I have in my own, when I know there is a better? Dearest sister, pray for me always; never forget me when in the chapel. Recollect, at sunset I shall always meet you at the foot of the cross in the *Miserere*. What a sweet remembrance!" Presently we shall have to return to these ladies; but first it is necessary that we should relate the circumstances which led to the removal of Mrs. Seton from Baltimore after a sojourn of only a few months, and brought about the fulfilment of her pious intentions in a manner she herself had never ventured to hope for.

In the autumn of 1808, a young lady, seeking re-

tirement from the world, had made up her mind ~~for~~ this purpose to go to some foreign conventual establishment; but hearing of Mrs. Seton's plans and wishes, came gladly to Baltimore, and was there offered by her father "as a child whom he consecrated to God." She became for the present an assistant in the school; but on the arrival of this first companion Mr. Babade, then her spiritual director, encouraged Mrs. Seton to discern the "announcement of an undertaking which would gradually collect round her a numerous band of spiritual daughters." The time for this was indeed already come. One morning, after holy communion, she felt an extraordinary impulse to devote herself to the care of poor female children, and to found for their benefit some abiding institution. Going at once to Mr. Dubourg, she said, "This morning, in my dear communion, I thought, Dearest Saviour, if You would but give me the care of poor little children, no matter how poor; and Mr. Cooper being directly before me at his thanksgiving, I thought, He has money; if he would but give it for the bringing up of poor little children, to know and love You." Mr. Cooper was a convert, a student at St. Mary's for the priesthood, and anxious to devote his property to the service of God. On hearing Mrs. Seton's words, Mr. Dubourg seemed lost in astonishment, and told her that Mr. Cooper had spoken to him that very morning of his thoughts being all for poor children's instruction, and that if he could find somebody to do it, he would give his money for that purpose; and he wondered if Mrs. Seton would be willing to undertake it. Struck with the wonderful coincidence, Mr. Dubourg advised each to reflect for a month on the subject, and acquaint him with the result. During this time there was no communication between the parties; nevertheless they returned at the appointed time, offering, the one his means, and the other her services, for the relief of Christ's poor.

The clergy consulted on the occasion could not but approve of an intention so plainly in the ordering

of God, and the site of Emmettsburg was fixed upon as affording "moral and physical advantages for a religious community, being far from the city and in the midst of wild mountain scenery."

The prospect now opening before Mrs. Seton was hailed with delight by all who knew her remarkable fitness for the work. Amongst others, her esteemed friend the Rev. J. Cheverus writes, almost in the language of prophecy, "How admirable is Divine Providence! *I see already numerous choirs of virgins following you to the altar. I see your holy order diffusing itself in the different parts of the United States, spreading every where the good odour of Jesus Christ, and teaching by their angelical lives and pious instructions how to serve God in purity and holiness.* I have no doubt, my beloved and venerable sister, that He who has begun this work, will bring it to perfection." The title of Mother was already gladly given every where to Mrs. Seton; and one lady after another came gathering around her, in fervour and humility offering themselves as candidates for the new sisterhood. A conventual habit was adopted (which was afterwards changed to that worn by the Sisters of Charity), and under the title of "Sisters of St. Joseph," a little band was organised under temporary rules.

The humble soul of Mother Seton, as she must now be called, was filled with such an overwhelming sense of the responsibility committed to her, that on the evening of the day she received it as a charge from her spiritual directors, she sunk weeping bitterly upon her knees; and after giving way to her emotions for some time, she confessed aloud before the sisters who were present the most frail and humiliating actions of her life, from her childhood upwards, and then exclaimed from the depths of her heart, "My gracious God! you know my unfitness for this task; I, who by my sins have so often crucified You: I blush with shame and confusion! How can I teach others, who know so little myself, and am so miserable and imperfect?"

Mrs. Seton bound herself privately at this time, in the presence of Bishop Carroll, by the usual vows, for a year; and soon afterwards she was joined by one who had long waited patiently until the will of God should permit her to follow where her heart had already gone before. Miss C. Seton, falling dangerously ill, was advised by her physician to try a sea-voyage as a last remedy, and thankfully determined to visit Mother Seton. She was accompanied by her sister Harriet, two brothers, and a servant. Contrary to all expectation, her health gradually began to improve, and on reaching Baltimore her attendants left her, with the exception of her sister Harriet, who stayed to take care of her. The illness again proving serious, change of air was once more advised, and Mother Seton then removed with the invalid to the site of her intended residence at Emmetsburg. Miss H. Seton of course accompanied them, with some of the community and Mother Seton's children. As no habitation was yet ready for the sisterhood, they were allowed by the Rev. Mr. Dubois, President of St. Mary's College (to which Mrs. Seton's sons had already been removed from Baltimore), to occupy a small log-house on the mountain. Here Miss C. Seton soon recovered some degree of health, and here her sister was strengthened to say, spite of all the persecution which she well knew such a step would entail from her own family, and although she was uncertain what effect it might have upon him to whom she was engaged, "It is done, my sister; I am a Catholic. The cross of our dearest Lord is the desire of my soul; I will never rest till He is mine."

At the end of July, Mother Seton and the whole of her community, now ten in number, besides her three daughters and her sister-in-law, removed to the little farm-house on their own land in St. Joseph's Valley, which was to be their present home. It was much too small to be considered any thing but a temporary refuge, containing only three or four rooms, and "a little closet just wide enough to hold an altar," where

the presence of the Blessed Sacrament made up for every privation; and a more commodious and ample building was being prepared at once, as rapidly as circumstances would admit. Meanwhile, in accordance with the institute of the Sisters of Charity, to which this was intended to conform, instruction of youth and care of the sick occupied the greater part of the sisters' time; and as it happened that a fever was just now breaking out in the neighbourhood, they received many petitions to come and tend those who were attacked by it. Full of zeal and piety, they cheerfully lent themselves to this good work, and gave the greatest edification wherever they went.

They were very poor, circumstances not yet allowing them to open a school; but all were so anxious to devote themselves to a life of mortification, that Mother Seton says, "carrot coffee, salt pork, and butter-milk, seemed too good a living." The expenses of building reduced them to a still more destitute condition; their bread was of the coarsest rye, and for many months they "did not know where the next meal would come from." On Christmas Day they rejoiced to have "some smoked herrings for dinner, and a spoonful of molasses for each." Yet the most perfect cheerfulness and harmony prevailed; they were literally all of one mind.

About the end of September, Miss H. Seton was received into the Church. As was expected, a torrent of reproaches from home followed this announcement; but nothing could now prevent the holy fervour of this young convert; and rejoicing to suffer the loss of all things, even, if need were, the love of him to whom her hand was promised, she still pleaded for an extension of her stay in St. Joseph's Valley. Here, while nursing her sick sister, she was herself seized with a violent fever; and within three months of her conversion, her remains were carried to a spot she had once playfully chosen as a last resting-place in the silent woods, and laid beneath the tree she had pointed out. Thus, although the last called, she became "the first-fruits of

those who sleep in St. Joseph's Valley." Her death was never forgotten by those who had the happiness to assist at it. Amidst the most intense sufferings, the names of God, heaven, or eternity, instantly fixed her attention, insensible to every other address. Her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament had been remarkable, and even in delirium the same Divine Object absorbed all her mind; her last sign of life was an effort to join the hymn at Benediction. It was impossible for her best friends not to rejoice that she was thus spared the sufferings and temptations that would have assailed her had she lived to return to New York. Far different, however, was the effect of her death upon her relations there; and when after four months more her sister Cecilia was also laid in that same little enclosure, planted with wild flowers, their indignation against this "pest of society" knew no bounds, even in its public expression. But all this, as Mother Seton herself observed, was "music to the spirit hoping only to be conformed to Him who was despised and rejected by men."

Two months before Miss C. Seton's death, the community were established in their new dwelling, a large log-house two stories high, with a sanctuary, sacristy, and an apartment where strangers could assist at Mass, facing one end of the sanctuary. The choir where the community heard Mass, &c. was in front of the altar. So poor was this altar, that its chief ornaments were a framed portrait of our dear Redeemer, which Mother Seton had brought with her from New York, her own little silver candlesticks, some wild laurel, paper flowers, &c. After placing themselves solemnly under the patronage of St. Joseph, the sisterhood commenced their labours on a much more extensive scale. They now opened a day and boarding school, and in May 1810, Mother Seton thus alludes to the condition of the house: "You know the enemy of all good-will of course makes his endeavours to destroy it; but it seems our Adored is determined on its full success, by the excellent subjects

He has placed in it. We are now twelve, and as many again are waiting for admission. I have a very, very large school to superintend every day, and the entire charge of the religious instruction of all the country round. All apply to the Sisters of Charity, who are night and day devoted to the sick and the ignorant. Our blessed Bishop intends removing a detachment of us to Baltimore, to perform the same duties there. We have a very good house, though a log-building; and it will be the mother-house and retreat in all cases, as a portion of the sisterhood will always remain in it, to keep the spinning, weaving, knitting, and school for country people, regularly progressing."

The income derived from the school and donations from friends now kept the house free from embarrassment, and in any case of emergency the generosity of the brothers Filicehi was unfailing. The following extract from a letter of Mother Seton's on an occasion of this kind, and the answer she received, will show the spirit of frankness and Christian confidence which prevailed between them: "Does it hurt you that I press so hard on you, and make no further application to my friends in New York? Consider, how can I apply to them for means which would go to the support only of a religion and institution they abhor; while what is taken from you is promoting your greatest happiness in this world, and bringing you nearer and nearer to the Adored in the next. But again let me repeat, if I have gone too far, stop me short for ever, if you find it necessary, without fear of the least wound to the soul you love; which receives all from your hands as from that of our Lord, and whenever they may be closed, will know that it is He who shuts them, who uses all for His own glory as He pleases. I do not write to Philip now, as this letter will serve to say all to both, except the fervency and attachment of my very soul to you both in Christ. May He be blessed and praised for ever. How great that attachment is, and with how much reason, can only be known

by one who once was what I have been, and can conceive what the contrast of past and present is. This is understood by Him above who gave you to me and us to you, for which, I trust, we will love, praise, and adore through eternity." "Chase your diffidence away," replies Mr. A. Filicchi; "speak to your brother the wants of a sister, and trust in Him who knows how to clothe and feed the birds of the air; and clothes the grass of the earth with brightness."

CHAPTER V.

IN 1811, measures were taken for procuring from France a copy of the regulations in use amongst the "Daughters of Charity," founded by St. Vincent of Paul, as it was intended that Mother Seton's community should model itself upon the same basis. It became necessary, however, to introduce some modification of the rules, as it was thought expedient that, at least for the present, the sisters should be occupied in the instruction of the young; and moreover, it was feared that Mother Seton's peculiar position as the sole guardian of five young children, might prove a hindrance to her being bound permanently as the superior of a religious community. She herself considered that her duties as a mother were paramount to every other, especially since her children's Protestant relations were numerous and wealthy. Writing to a friend on this subject, she says, "By the law of the Church I so much love, I could never take an obligation which interfered with my duties to the children, except I had an independent provision and guardian for them, which the whole world could not supply to my judgment of a mother's duty." This and every other difficulty in the adoption of the rules was however at length arranged by the wisdom of Bishop (now Archbishop) Carroll;

and in January 1812, the constitutions of the community were confirmed by the archbishop and superior of St. Mary's College, in Baltimore, and sent for observance to the sisters. A year was allowed to all already in the sisterhood to try their vocation, at the end of which time they might either leave the institution or bind themselves by vows. Mother Seton was authorised, even after she had taken the vows, to watch over her children's welfare; and a conditional provision was made for securing to the community her permanent superintendence.

The general rules and object of the Sisters of Charity are so well known that little need be said on that subject. The society was to be composed of unmarried women and widows, sound of mind and body, and between sixteen and twenty-eight years of age at their entrance. It was also expected that they should desire to devote their whole lives to the service of God in His poor, and in the instruction of children; though the vows were taken only for a single year, and renewed annually. "Though they do not belong to a religious order (such a state being incompatible with the objects of their society), yet, as they are more exposed to the world than members of a religious order, having in most circumstances no other monastery than the houses of the sick or the school-room, no other cell than a rented apartment, no other chapel than the parish church, no cloister but the public street or hospital, no enclosure but obedience, no gate but the fear of God, no veil but that of holy modesty,—they are taught to aim at the highest virtue, and to comport themselves under all circumstances, with as much edification as if they were living in a convent. The salvation of their soul is the paramount consideration they are to have in view. The cultivation of humility, charity, and simplicity, the performance of their actions in union with the Son of God, contempt of the world, disengagement from created things, love of abjection, patient and even cheerful endurance of all earthly crosses and trials, and

a great confidence in Divine Providence, are practices which the sisters consider essential to their profession."

During the year of probation ten more ladies were added to the community, which now consisted of thirty sisters; and by the adoption of a settled rule of life, Mother Seton had the happiness of seeing them make daily progress both in fervour towards God and in usefulness to their neighbours. There was one amongst them who was a source of far deeper joy and gratitude than the rest, and this was her own eldest daughter Anna or Annina. From early childhood she had been remarkable for her virtue and piety; and now, being both good, clever, and beautiful, she was the delight of all who knew her. When only fifteen, her hand had been sought in marriage by a young gentleman of great wealth and talent; and with the approbation of all his friends, he journeyed to his distant home to make the necessary preparations: there, however, he found his only parent, a mother, so strongly opposed to it, that he was prevailed upon to break his faith with Miss Seton. Happily, with the true spirit of a Christian, she regarded the whole matter as ordered by God for her greater good, and devoted herself more assiduously than before to all the religious practices of the community in St. Joseph's Valley. Though still only amongst the pupils, she strictly observed the rules of the novitiate, rising at four both in winter and summer, that she might spend an hour in prayer and meditation before Mass in the chapel. She performed in secret many heroic acts of mortification, and had so little taste for the world, that when visiting a very excellent family in Baltimore, she implored her mother to recal her to St. Joseph's Valley, because "her soul wearied of the distractions of a secular life." Her example animated the pupils to an extraordinary devotion, and some of the elder girls formed themselves into a band under her direction, governed by special rules, and habitually seeking to mortify themselves by acts of penance. At the same time she both watched tenderly over the younger

pupils—especially those preparing for their first communion—and also maintained a correspondence with those young ladies who had left the school, seeking to keep alive in their hearts the good principles they had learned amongst the Sisters. Anxious to consecrate herself more perfectly to God, she applied, as soon as her age permitted, for admission to the Sisterhood, and was gladly received; but towards the end of September 1811, taking a violent cold, she soon became so ill, that all hope of seeing her continue to edify the community by her exemplary piety was sorrowfully abandoned. As for herself, she only rejoiced to believe that she was near her end; and she continued to the last, both to practise perfect humility and patience in herself, and to encourage it in others. A very painful remedy having been proposed and then postponed, she said, "Oh no, to-day is Friday; let it be done to-day, it is the best day, my dearest Lord." To her companions she wrote, "I am now suffering in earnest, not as we used to do on our knees, when meditating on the Passion of our dear Lord. We used to wish to suffer with Him; but when called to prove the wish, how different is the reality from the imagination! Let my weakness be a lesson to you."

When Mother Seton half reproached her for her little care of her health, "rising at the first bell, and even being on the watch to ring it the moment the clock struck; washing at the pump in the severest weather, often eating in the refectory what sickened her stomach, &c.—'Ah, dear mother,' she replied, colouring deeply, as if she was wounding humility, 'if our dear Lord called me up to meditate, was I wrong to go? If I washed at the pump, did not others more delicate do it? If I ate what I did not like, was it not proper, since it is but a common Christian act to control my appetite? Besides, what would my example have been to my class, if I had done otherwise in any of these cases? Indeed, I have given too much bad example without this. Dearest Lord, pardon me.'"

Night and day did Mother Seton watch over her suffering child; and it is said that "it would be difficult to decide which was the more worthy of admiration, the daughter pressing forward with eagerness to her heavenly home, or the mother generously offering the sacrifice of her first-born child."

On the 30th of January, she received with great fervour the last Sacraments; but her death was yet delayed for some weeks. Her mother at this time writes to a friend: "The dear, lovely, and excellent child of my heart is on the point of departure. During the whole of the last week she has been every moment on the watch, expecting every coughing-fit would be the last; but with a peace, resignation, and contentment of soul truly consoling, not suffering a tear to be shed around her, she has something comforting to say to all. . . . When the last change took place, and cold sweat, gasping breathing, and agonising pain indicated immediate dissolution,—the pain of her eyes so great, she could no longer fix them,—she said, 'I can no longer look at you, my dear crucifix; but I enter my agony with my Saviour; I drink the cup with Him. Yes, adorable Lord, Your will, and Yours alone, be done. I will it too. I leave my dearest mother, because You will it; my dearest, dearest mother.' Poor mother! you will say, and yet happy mother. You can well understand this for me, dear friend,—to see her receive the last Sacraments with my sentiments of them, her precious soul stretching out towards heaven, the singular purity of her life, of which I could give you the most amiable proofs, my calculations of this world,—all, dear friend, combine to silence poor nature."

On the Sunday before her death, Annina begged that the young ladies from the school might come in, to learn a lesson of human frailty from her wasted form. Being fifty in number, they were admitted a few at a time, and she addressed them in her dying voice with the most impressive words. Allowing them

to see the mortification which had already begun in her neck, she said, "See the body which I used to dress and lace up so well, what is it now? Look at these hands! the worms will have poor banquets here! What is beauty? what is life? Nothing, nothing. Oh, love and serve God faithfully, and prepare for eternity. Some of you, dear girls, may be soon as I am now; be good, and pray for me." Annina prayed very earnestly to die a professed Sister of Charity; and though the time had not yet arrived for any to bind themselves by the usual vows, she was permitted to do so on the day before her death, thus becoming the first professed member of the Sisterhood. The following act of consecration was written by her the morning before her death, kneeling at the foot of a crucifix:

"Amiable and adorable Saviour! at the foot of Your cross I come to consecrate myself to You for ever. It has pleased You, in Your infinite mercy and goodness, to unite and fasten me to it with You. O dear Jesus, I offer You all my sufferings, little as they are, and will accept with resignation (oh, by Your grace, let me say, love) whatever You will please to send in future. I offer, in union with Your blessed merits, all the sufferings I ever had; those which I endured at a time when I did not learn to unite them to Yours. Those I have experienced during this last sickness I offer more particularly to Your glory, and in expiation of the offences and grievous sins committed during my life. Oh, my Jesus, pardon the impatience, ill-humour, and numberless other faults I now commit; I beseech Thee to forgive. I offer Thee my sufferings, in union with Your merits, in expiation of my many and daily offences."

On the following morning she requested her two young sisters to kneel by her bed and sing:

"Though all the pains of hell surround,
No evil will I fear;
For while my Jesus is my Friend,
No danger can come near."

They tried to compose their voices, broken by sobs, that they might please their dying sister, whom their mother, sitting at her pillow, was supporting in her arms. But their voices refused to sing at such a moment; and soon the struggles of the departing soul became so severe, that Mother Seton was obliged to retire from her now insensible child to the chapel, where she remained before the Blessed Sacrament till all was over.

On the following day the body was committed to the ground, and "Mother Seton, more like a statue than a living being, followed her sweet child to the grave. But one tear was seen upon her cheek as she returned; and raising her eyes to heaven, she uttered slowly, as if yielding to the full force of the sentiment, 'Father, Thy will be done!'" Thus died Sister Annina, on March 12th, 1812, in the seventeenth year of her age.

She was cherished warmly in the memory of all who had ever known her; and the village children, whom she had especially chosen for her pupils, kept her grave always green and fragrant with moss and lilies of the valley. The loss of this dear child was very acutely felt by Mother Seton, and she writes from the fulness of her heart to a friend, "The separation from my angel has left so new and deep an impression on my mind, that if I was not obliged to live in these dear ones (her children), I should unconsciously die in her; unconsciously, for never, by a free act of the mind, would I now reject *His will*." "Who can tell the silent solitude of the mother's soul, its peace and rest in God!" "Eternity was Anna's darling word. I find it written in every thing that belonged to her; music, books, copies, the walls of her little chamber,—every where that word."

In September 1812, one Rev. S. Gabriel Brute was appointed to assist the Rev. Mr. Dubois; and his friendship and services were of the greatest possible value to Mother Seton and the community, for whom he now

celebrated Mass four times a week. He was a man of high spirits and great physical activity, singularly gifted with energy and power of expression; and from the first he and Mother Seton sympathised heartily.

In the following July, the community, now eighteen in number, bound themselves by the vows of poverty, charity, and obedience, ten young ladies being at the same time admitted into the novitiate.

The war with Great Britain at this time made many things so expensive that a more rigid economy was necessary; to which, however, the sisters cheerfully lent themselves. Sugar was dispensed with, and coarser clothing introduced. In 1814, a detachment of sisters was sent to Philadelphia, to take charge of the children whose parents had died of the yellow fever; and in 1817 a colony was established in New York from the mother-house of Emmettsburg. The instructions and affectionate exhortations given by Mother Seton to those sisters who were leaving her for another mission, were beautifully characteristic of her idea of what the life of a Christian, and, above all, a Sister of Charity, should be.

She herself most strictly observed the rules of the house, though her health was now becoming feeble; "was incessantly occupied in the duties of her situation, yet always calm, self-possessed, even-tempered, and her soul apparently collected in God. She was remarkable for her love of poverty and mortification of the senses." At first she had taken charge of the highest class amongst the pupils, but now this was no longer necessary. Yet she still visited the school-room constantly, encouraging, counselling, and edifying by her presence no less than by her words. She considered the young ladies as a sacred trust from God, and was accustomed to say to the Sisters under whose particular care they were, "Be to them as our guardian-angels are to us." Twice a week she gave familiar instructions to the elder pupils, in which she

displayed her singular aptitude for education. Yet her manner was rather that of the intelligent and affectionate parent than of the pedantic teacher; and her sweetness won so readily the confidence of her pupils, that they opened their hearts to her as their dearest friend. "Your little mother, my darlings," she would say, "does not come to teach you to be good nuns or Sisters of Charity; but rather, I would wish to fit you for that world in which you are destined to live; to teach you how to be good mistresses and mothers of families. Yet, if the dear Master selects one among you to be closer to Him, happy are you; He will teach you Himself."

In 1814 Mrs. Seton's eldest son completed his eighteenth year. He was anxious to enter the navy, whilst his mother wished him to go into some mercantile house; but this was rendered somewhat difficult, in consequence of the disturbed state of commercial affairs during the war. However, the Rev. Mr. Bruté being anxious to visit Europe, she resolved to send her son under his guardianship to the Messrs. Filicchi, at least for a time. Two years later her second son was placed in the house of a merchant at Baltimore, and went afterwards to Leghorn when his brother left to carry out his own purpose of entering the navy.

About this time Mr. Philip Filicchi died; and deeply was his loss deplored, not only by Mother Seton and his more immediate friends, but by all. His death was said to be almost a public calamity, sorrowed over by "hundreds of poor fed at his hands, orphans depending on his support, and prisoners relieved by his charity."

CHAPTER VI.

Two months after this time Mother Seton was called upon to render back to God another of her children, her youngest daughter, whose intelligent and amiable disposition had endeared her to all who knew her. She had been ailing now since 1812, when she was injured by a fall on the ice; and that she might have the best medical advice, she was removed for some time to Baltimore. Whilst there, her mother used the most affectionate endeavours, by frequent little notes, to turn the mind of her suffering child to the end for which she was afflicted. The following is one of them:

"My soul's little darling,—Mother's eyes fill with tears ever when she thinks of you; but loving tears of joy, that my dear one may suffer and bear pain, and resign herself to the will of our Dearest, and be the child of His cross. You know, mother has often told you that the one who suffers most is the dearest to me; and so our Dearest loves the child He afflicts with a double love. Remember, my dear one, what mother told you about love and obedience to our so kind and tender friend;* and our Dearest, not to forget Him for a moment. You know He never forgets you; and do not mind kneeling, but speak your heart to Him any where. May His dear, dearest blessing be on you. * * * Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, bless and love you!"

By the pious example of this amiable child, many practices of devotion were introduced amongst the boarders; and as she was a general favourite at St. Joseph's, her influence had the happiest effect. The orphans educated there had been formed into a class distinct from the boarders, and were disposed to resent this separation as a humiliating position; Miss Rebecca Seton, however, voluntarily ranked herself amongst them, and immediately all bitterness of feeling was

* The lady with whom she was staying.

changed into grateful affection. Though only thirteen years of age, she was devout and fervent in approaching the Sacraments: and, indeed, she needed all the strength and consolation which these alone can bestow; for during the last six months of her life she was scarcely ever free from the most excruciating pain. Nevertheless, she was always patient, resigned, and even cheerful in manner, fulfilling the anxious wishes of her mother, that she might look on her sufferings only as a transitory means to a glorious and eternal end. "Death, death, my mother," she would say in her agony; "it seems so strange that I shall be no more here. You will come back (from the grave-yard), dearest mother, alone. No little Rebecca behind the curtain. But that is only one side; when I look at the other, I forget all;—you will be comforted. If Dr. C. were to say now, Rebecca, you will get well, I could not wish it,—no, my dearest Saviour! I am convinced of the happiness of an early death. And *to sin no more*;—that is the point, my mother;" throwing her arms around her, and repeating "*sin no more*."

A few extracts from the journal of her dear child's last days, made by Mother Seton for the Rev. T. Bruté, who was still absent in Europe, will describe more touchingly than any words of our own the admirable fortitude with which the little sufferer "endured to the end."

"It seemed to me this morning," said she, "that I could not bear it; but one look at our Saviour changed it all. What were the dislocations of His bones, my mother! Oh, how can I mind mine!" Not a change now from continued sitting, but to kneel a little on one knee; obliged to give up her bed entirely. We tried to-day. 'I know,' said she, 'I cannot; but we must take it quietly, my dear mother, and offer up the pains,'—trying to get in and out of bed,—'and let it take its way.' Finding it impossible, she said, 'I must lie down no more until—but never mind, my mother, come sit by me.' Softly now she sings the little words,

after resting on one knee awhile, for our evening prayer.

"Now another day is gone,
So much pain and sorrow o'er,
So much nearer our dear home:
There we'll praise Him,
There we'll bless Him evermore;"

then leans so peaceably her dear head on my lap, and offers up, as she says, 'the poor mass of corruption, covered with the blood of our Jesus.'

"The little beloved now sits up in a chair night and day, leaning on my arm, the bones so rubbed she cannot rest on one knee as before; but says so cheerfully, Our Lord makes me pay for past misdemeanours."

"What a morning with our little one! her perspectives! Straining forward with rolling rapid tears, she said, putting her arms around me, 'Mother, the worst is, I shall have to give an account of all the Masses I have heard so carelessly; O my carelessness!' the tears redoubled. 'My first communion! yet surely I tried not to make it badly; and if, dearest mother, I shall have the blessings of the last Sacraments'—then she looked so earnestly at the crucifix, and wiped her eyes. Again spoke of Extreme Unction; but after all the comfort another burst of tears. 'Yet the last struggles, mother!—there is something in death—I cannot tell. How lazy I am, my mother; and how sweet and bright is Nina's carpet!'^{*} Oh, how I will beg our Lord to let me come to you, when you will be here so lonely! You know, mother, I never enjoyed any little pleasure in this world, unless you shared it, or I told you of it. How I will beg of Him to let me come and comfort you! You know too, I could guess your pains, even when you did not speak.' But oh, the thousand little endearments of her manner, while saying these words, so dear to a mother's heart! Every waking through the night speaking of what

^{*} Her sister Annina *carpet*, the blue sky, seen from the window.

they were doing in heaven! Her poor leg burst—pain in the side excessive—but the little cheerful laugh and pain go together. ‘How good it is, oh how good! since it shows our Lord will not let it last long.’

“‘Last night,’ said she, ‘in the midst of my misery, I seemed some where gone out of my body, and summoning all the saints and angels to pray for me; but the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and my guardian-angel, St. Augustine, and St. Xavier, whom I love so much, (St. Augustine’s burning heart for our Lord, you know, mother,) these I claimed and insisted on defending me in judgment.—Oh, my mother! that judgment,’ then again her eyes fastened on the crucifix as long as pain would permit. ‘O mother, how I suffer, every bone, every joint, every limb; do mother, pray for my faith. You see, dearest, every day something of warning is added that I soon must go; yet I remember only twice to have thought my sufferings too hard since I was hurt;—so our dear Lord pity me, and give me a short purgatory: yet in this *His will* be done; at least then I shall be safe, and sin no more.’”

“Always wishing to be employed, she cut some leaves of artificial flowers, and seemed very earnestly employed in sewing on a small garment for a poor child, with trembling hands and panting breath, two days before her agony.

“The superior came,” Rev. Mr. Dubois, “and seeing the pitiful state of the poor darling, kindly offered to remain with her. Her gratitude was inexpressible. The presence of a priest seemed to arm her against every power of the enemy. He told her, about midnight, that as she had not slept nor ate any thing for the last twenty-four hours, it would be well to take a little paregoric. ‘Well,’ said she very gently to him, ‘if I go to sleep I shall not come back; so good bye to you all. Do give my love to every body; good bye, dear Kit’ (her sister Josephine, kissing her most tenderly), ‘and you, my dearest mother.’ But here her little heart failed her, and she hid herself in my bosom.

Again, trying to compose herself, she said, 'I will give your love to every body I meet with on the way.' But no sleep or rest for her." So dawned for child and mother All Souls' Day. "It passed as yesterday; only increased pains. Our God, our God; to wait one hour for an object every moment expected! but poor Ber's hours and agonies are known to You alone!—her meek, submissive looks, artless appeals of sorrow, and unutterable distress. The hundred little acts of piety that All Souls' Day, so sad and sorrowful; the fears of the poor mother's heart; her bleeding heart for patience and perseverance in so weak a child; the silent long looks at each other; fears of interfering in any way with the designs of infinite love! Oh, that day and night and following day! The Rev. Superior told her he would not wish her sufferings shortened. She quietly gave up, felt her pulse no more, inquired no more about going, or what time it was; but with her heart of sorrow pictured on her countenance, looking now at the crucifix, again at mother, seemed to mind nothing else. Once she said, 'My love is so weak—so imperfect—my mother; I have been so unfaithful, I have proved so little my love.' Her poor little heart seemed sinking, yet eyes stedfastly fixed on the crucifix. 'My mother; kiss that Blessed Side for me.' Her small crucifix round her neck was often pressed to her lips,—those cold dying lips; and then she would press it to her heart. 'Hangs my helpless soul on thee,' she would say. Night came again. She often bowed her head, in which all her pain seemed centred, to the holy water presented by the Rev. Superior. We said some short prayers, and she repeated, 'In the hour of death defend me; call me to come to Thee; receive me.' Near four in the morning, she said, 'Let me sit once more on the bed; it will be the last struggle.' Cecilia's arms and mother's supporting her, she sank between us; the darling head fell on the well-known heart it loved so well, and all was over. My God! my God! That morning she had said, 'Be not

sorrowful, my mother! I shall not go far from you; I am sure our dear Lord will let me come and console you.' Josephine's tears hurt her. 'I do not look,' she said, 'to being left in the grave, and you all turning home without me; I look high up.'

In 1818, M. Bruté again came to reside at St. Mary's College, and became Confessor to the Community of St. Joseph's. This was a great consolation for Mother Seton, who had the highest regard for this excellent priest. Her health was now very feeble; but she exerted herself to fulfil with diligence the onerous duties of her responsible office. "I cannot die one way," she writes to a friend, "so I try to die the other, and keep the straight path to God alone." She maintained the tenderest watchfulness over those Sisters absent on any mission; and thus writes to one, who was lamenting her inability, through illness, to fulfil the charge she had undertaken: "My own dear sister, I take a laugh and a cry at your flannels and plaisters. Never mind; God is God in it all. If you are to do His work, the strength will be given you; if not, my precious child, some one else will do it, and you come back to your home. No great affair where His dear atom is, if only His will is done. Peace, dearest soul, from our Jesus. I took a long look at our dear crucifix for you. All are here nearly as you left; our faithful God the same!—ever your little mother."

During the years we have so rapidly passed over, many sisters were summoned from the little community to their eternal home. And if it were possible to relate of their pious souls the different acts of humility, charity, and devotion by which they edified all who knew them, and embalmed their names in the memory of the Sisterhood, some idea might be formed of the holy, happy retreat over which Mother Seton presided in St. Joseph's Valley. Many were converts. Amongst others, we are told of one who had been a Methodist, but was ever seeking after the true Church until she found it. "Luther is Luther," she used to say to

those on whom she urged her anxiety before her conversion, "Calvin is Calvin, Wesley is Wesley; but where is the Church of the Apostles?" By God's good grace she was guided at last to St. Joseph's Valley, where her search happily found an end.

It has been already mentioned more than once, that Mother Seton's health had become very feeble; and in 1820 her lungs were so seriously affected, that her medical attendants gave no hope of her ultimate recovery. For her this world had long ceased to be any thing but "a dark passage leading to eternity. I see nothing," she says, "but the blue sky and our altars; all the rest is so plainly not to be looked at. We talk now all day of my death, and how it will be, just like the rest of the house-work. What is it else? What are we come into the world for? Why is it so long, but this last, great, eternal end? It seems to me so simple, when I look up to the crucifix." The year before her death she thus writes to a priest: "O my father, friend, could I hear my last stage of cough, and feel my last stage of pain, in the tearing away my prison-walls, how could I bear my joy! The thought of going home, and called by His will! What a transport! But, they say, don't you fear to die? Such a sinner must fear; but I fear much more to live, and know as I do that every morning finds my account but lengthened and enlarged. I don't fear death half so much as my hateful, vile self."

Twelve years she had now spent in her retirement. During the last four months she was confined to her room, and her sufferings at times were very great; but only under obedience to her director would she submit to any effort for their alleviation. Not a complaint was to be heard; and if through extreme pain there escaped her an involuntary sign of impatience, she was uneasy until she had received absolution. Her humility was as great as her resignation. One of the Sisters saying something which implied a hope of going to heaven immediately after death, Mother Seton ex-

claimed fervently, "My blessed God! how far from that thought am I, of going straight to heaven! such a miserable creature as I am!" M. Bruté was constantly with her, and his ministry was a source of the most abundant graces to her soul.

In these last days she was not left without singular consolations. She said, "It seems as if our Lord and His Blessed Mother stood continually by me, in a corporeal form, to comfort, cheer, and encourage me in the different weary and tedious hours of pain." More than ever did Mother Seton now appreciate the grace of her conversion. Being asked by her director what she considered the greatest blessing ever bestowed upon her by God, she answered, "That of being brought into the Catholic Church." And speaking with holy transport of the happiness of dying in the arms of this tender Mother, she added, "How few know the value of such a blessing!"

Being about to receive the last Sacraments, she begged that all her spiritual daughters might assemble in her room, where they were addressed in her name by the Rev. Mr. Dubois as follows: "Mother Seton being too weak, charges me to recommend to you at this sacred moment, in her place: first, to be united together as true Sisters of Charity; second, to stand most faithfully by your rules; third, that I ask pardon for all the scandals she may have given you, that is, for indulgences prescribed during sickness by me or the physicians." Mother Seton's voice added, "I am thankful, sisters, for your kindness in being present at this trial. Be children of the Church, be children of the Church."

When the last awful moment was at hand, the sisters pressed in anguish around the bed of their cherished and saintly mother. Her only daughter was fainting beside her from intense emotion; but on Mother Seton's heavenward countenance was no shadow of grief, doubt, or disturbance; nothing but perfect peace. She lay immovably in the hands of God, re-

peating, "May the most just, the most high, and the most amiable will of God be accomplished for ever!"

A sister whom she requested to repeat the favourite prayer, Soul of Christ, sanctify me; Body of Christ, save me, &c. being unable through her sobs to proceed, Mother Seton finished it herself. "Jesus, Mary, Joseph!" were her last words. Thus died Mother Seton, January 4th, 1821, in the 47th year of her age.

Amidst the tears and lamentations of the whole community, her remains were carried to their last resting-place on the following day. A cross and a rose-tree were planted on her grave, and from innumerable grateful hearts went up to heaven with the Adorable Sacrifice the most pure and fervent prayers that her soul may rest in peace. Since that time a marble monument has been raised over her remains, on the four sides of which are inscribed, "To the memory of E. A. Seton, Foundress." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." "The just shall live in everlasting remembrance." "The just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And on the wall of the humble chamber in which she breathed her last may be read the following inscription: "Here, near this door, by this fire-place, on a poor, lowly couch, died our cherished and saintly Mother Seton, on the 4th of January, 1821. She died in poverty, but rich in faith and good works; may we, her children, walk in her footsteps, and share one day in her happiness. Amen."

But little remains to be said of the character of Mother Seton. It was best expressed by her singular and sanctifying influence over others. The impression she produced by her look, her manner, and her words, was extraordinary; and many instances are recorded which prove the effect to have been as lasting as it was powerful. We are told of a gentleman whose two daughters were brought up in her school, but who from his early childhood had neglected all religious duties. The children had naturally followed his example;

but were not long inhabitants of St. Joseph's Valley, before they not only learned the value of religious privileges themselves, but earnestly desired that their beloved father might share the same blessings.

Prevailing upon him to visit Mother Seton, they had the great consolation of finding that her magical influence won his heart to the immediate consideration of his soul's salvation. He declared that he would willingly travel six hundred miles to enjoy a view of Mother Seton's eyes, even if she did not open her lips; and returning home, he instantly, in accordance with a promise he had made her, prepared to receive the Sacraments of the Church, and some time after died a happy death.

All who saw her acknowledged the same charm. Her power of language was remarkably fascinating; and with a gifted and accomplished mind and singularly refined manner, she was fitted to adorn any circle. Her pupils could scarcely have had a more beautiful model before them, of a lady, a mother, or a Christian. Charitable and considerate for all around her, she was rigidly severe with herself. In dress, food, and observance of the rules, she mortified her natural inclination unsparingly. This was a cross she felt it imperative to hold closely to her heart; for it was often a severe effort to bring her will into submission to the directions of her superiors, and she was tried with an almost continual sense of dryness in her spiritual duties. But her faith triumphed over all. "In the hour of manifestation," she writes to her former director, "when all this cross-working shall be explained, we shall find that in this period of our poor life we are most ripe for the business for which we were sent. While the ploughers go over us, then we are safe. No fears of pleasing ourselves; no danger of mistaking God's will. No; if I thought that by investigation and an appeal to superior authority I should be to-morrow released from this cloud of darkness, yet I would not take one step. And you, my dear master and captain in the way of the cross, you

know that my only safe way (I speak for salvation) is to remain quite still with Magdalen. You well know that He who works my fate has no need of any other help from me but a good will to do His will, and an entire abandonment to His good providence. Let them plough, let them grind, so much the better,—the grain will be the sooner prepared for its owner; whereas, should I step forward and take my own cause in hand, the father of the widow and orphan would say that I distrust Him. Shall we make schemes and plans of human happiness, which must be so uncertain in obtaining, and if obtained—trash! death! eternity? Oh, my father, *sursum corda*; we know better than to be cheated by such attractions. No; we will offer the hourly sacrifice, and drink our cup to the last drop; and we, when least expecting it, shall enter into our rest." She had the highest veneration for the character of a priest; and it was remarked by a saintly prelate, whose own name is honoured throughout the Church in America, that no one ever impressed his mind so forcibly as Mother Seton did, with the idea of what a true priest ought to be.

Much of Mother Seton's time was devoted to writing; and the Rev. Superior employed her able pen in preparing from the French ascetic literature, instructions and meditations for her spiritual children. Correspondence with the clergy, laity, and the parents of her pupils, also occupied all the leisure she could spare from more important duties.

It only remains to be added, that the community which Mother Seton founded has been blessed with great increase and prosperity. Spacious buildings now stand where she assembled her little band of Sisters in the log-hut; and far and wide through the United States has spread both the odour of her sanctity and the influence of her charity and zeal. One institution after another has been founded from St. Joseph's Valley, and there are now "520 Sisters; of whom 147 are at Emmettsburg, and the rest distributed among the hospitals, orphan-asylums, and schools throughout the

country. It is computed that these Sisters bestow their charitable care daily upon upwards of eight thousand persons, viz. nineteen hundred sick patients, eighteen hundred orphan girls, and four thousand seven hundred female children, most of whom receive gratuitous instruction."

THE

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. VINCENT OF PAUL.

"Let us show our love for our neighbor, not only in words, but also in deeds."—St. John, 1st Epist., iii. 18.

"As early as 1817 the Right Reverend Dr. Conolly, Bishop of New York, applied for the services of the Sisters of Charity from Emmitsburg, Md., and obtained them. New York being the native place of Mother Seton, the selection of the Sisters, who were to be sent here, was a matter of no small importance, as they who were to represent her abroad, in the life of perfection which she had embraced, would be narrowly watched by her former acquaintances, and would reflect honor or discredit upon her profession, according to their ability and fidelity, in attending to the duties of their charge. The mission was confided to the care of Sister Rosa White, whose zeal, piety and engaging manners had already contributed vastly to the success of the Orphan Asylum established in Philadelphia, and eminently qualified her for undertaking an institution of the same kind in the city of New York, on the 20th of June, 1817. The Sisters commenced, in an humble way, an institution which was destined to become, in the course of time, a most flourishing house for orphans. On this occasion, as before, Mother Seton delivered to her spiritual daughters, concise but comprehensive instructions, recom

mending to them especially a spirit of union and charity amongst themselves, fidelity to their holy rules, and a kind manner to strangers. By observing her wise counsels, the sisters succeeded in the work of charity; it went on prospering and triumphing over all the difficulties which are usually met with in the commencement of such undertakings, until it has risen to a degree of usefulness unsurpassed by any other institution of the kind in the United States. The Sisters of Charity at first occupied as an Asylum a small frame house, which stood on the site of the present spacious building in Prince Street, and only five orphans were confided to their care during the first twelve months. In the course of another year, the number had increased to twenty-eight, one third of whom were boys." The number of orphans yearly increased, until it became necessary to erect a separate institution for the accommodation of boys, which was not practicable, until 1847. Then, owing to the zeal and energy of the friends of the orphans, an eligible site, with extensive grounds, was obtained for the purpose, and an elegant and spacious building erected thereon. The number of children that would soon occupy both Asylums, would require the care of more Sisters than were at present employed, and the Mother House at Emmitsburg was not willing to give a sufficient number of Sisters for the new establishments about to be erected. This circumstance urged the necessity of having a Mother House to supply the increasing wants of the diocese. On the 8th of December, 1846, Feast of the "Immaculate Conception" of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Right Reverend Bishop Hughes constituted the Sisters of Charity in the Diocese of New York, a local community, under the title of "Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent of Paul"—the Sisters adhering, in every particular, to the original constitutions, rules, dress and customs of the Mother House of St. Joseph's, Emmitsburg, according to the primitive practices established by Mother Seton,

and their only desire is, to be found worthy representatives and members of the community founded by their cherished and sainted Mother. Many of those who have established the present foundation, were her especial favorites, and assisted her in the government of the Community of St. Joseph's. A few months after the organization of the Community, at the request of the Right Reverend Bishop Hughes, "the Holy Father, by Divine Providence, Pius IX., graciously granted to the Community of Sisters of Charity established in New York, and now depending upon the same Bishop, all and each of the faculties, indulgences, and other spiritual graces and privileges, already conceded to the Community of the same Sisters founded at Emmitsburg," and at the same time expresses his satisfaction and approbation at the zeal manifested for the honor of God and the salvation of souls.

In this way was the Mother House of the Society of the Sisters of Charity established in New York, on which God has been pleased to shed so many benedictions; that from the time they commenced the institution, their number, which was then only thirty-one, has almost imperceptibly increased, thereby enabling them to do the good that has been witnessed and felt by all classes of persons, and has extended their usefulness to a greater number of helpless orphans of both sexes—comforting the sick and the poor, consoling the afflicted, and imparting instruction daily to thousands of poor and destitute children—so that we can say with truth, it is the work of God, for according to St. Paul, "Whatever tends to good, comes from God," we are not surprised to see such an amount of good accomplished by the Sisters of Charity, when we know they are prompted and encouraged by the bright example and wise precepts of their Holy Founder, St. Vincent of Paul, who constantly reminds them of the necessity of being at all times animated by the most tender piety and zeal in the fulfillment of all their duties, that they should belong to God alone, to

see him in all, and all in him,—in each other, in those whom they instruct ; in the child of the opulent, (whose spiritual indigence is often extreme,) in the dear destitute orphans, who look up to them as their spiritual mothers, in the poor sick, whom they are to encourage and cherish as the special objects of their care and devotion, and in all with whom they have any intercourse. Their hearts must be enamored of his adorable perfections, deeply penetrated with gratitude for the gifts and graces bestowed on them, and with an affectionate and devoted love for him as their Father, Saviour, and All.

The Community at present numbers 178 members, 114 of whom are professed Sisters ; 56 Novices, 8 Pastulants, besides the Mother House, to which is attached a Novitiate and Academy containing 200 boarders ; there are thirteen missionary establishments ; St. Vincent's Hospital, accommodating, during the past year, 900 patients, many of whom were free ; one Asylum for boys, containing 400, between the ages of three and ten years ; six Female Orphan Asylums, containing 700 children ; three Pay Schools ; eleven Poor Schools, numbering 3700 children, all of whom receive gratuitous instruction.

The Sisters of Charity, spread over a great portion of the universe, shall perpetuate forever the charity of their Sainted Father, Vincent of Paul. O, admirable effects of the mercy of a single individual, or rather of the mercy of God himself, in his faithful minister ; and happy those who have the ineffable honor of being the pious servants of our Lord in his suffering members. The refuge of the miserable, the mothers of orphans, the consolers of the afflicted : even in this life it obtains for them the sweetest enjoyments by the practice of charity, the "Queen of virtues," in fine, it merits for them a precious death, which will put them in possession of the brilliant and celestial crown reserved for deeds of mercy.

SHE once was a lady of honour and wealth,
Bright glow'd on her features the roses of health ;
Her vesture was blended of silk and of gold,
And her motion shook perfume from every fold ;
Joy revell'd around her—love shone at her side,
And gay was her smile, as the glance of a bride ;
And light was her step, in the mirth-sounding hall,
When she heard of the daughters of Vincent of Paul

Her down-bed a pallet—her trinkets a bead,
Her lustre—one taper that serves her to read,
Her sculpture – the crucifix nail'd by her bed,
Her paintings one print of the thorn-crowned head ;
Her cushion—the pavement, that wearies her knees,
Her music the Psalm, or the sigh of disease ;
The delicate lady live mortified there,
And the feast is forsaken for fasting and prayer.

Behold her, ye worldly ! behold her, ye vain !
Who shrink from the pathway of virtue and pain ;
Who yield up to pleasure, your nights and your day
Forgetful of service, forgetful of praise.
Ye lazy philosophers—self seeking men,—
Ye fireside philanthropists, great at the pen,
How stands in the balance your eloquence weighed,
With the life and the deeds of that high-born maid ?

[GERALD GRIFFIN.]



THE

LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR.

SCARCELY fifteen years have yet elapsed since this Order, an heroic witness, amidst poverty and difficulty, of true Catholic charity, was established in a far-away town, in Brittany, by a poor priest named M. Le Pailleur. His only wealth consisted in the most pure and perfect trust in God; but earnestly desirous to do something for the destitute poor of his parish, he was not deterred by the total want of external means. Saint Servan, where this good man lived, is near the town of Saint Malo; and as the labouring classes are chiefly employed in fishing, or as sailors, a large proportion of the helpless women in the place are the widows of those who have perished at sea.

It was to rescue these from the misery and depravity in which too many of them were sunk, that M. Le Pailleur first organised that admirable society of Sisters of the Poor, which has by the blessing of God spread from town to town in France, and even crossed the channel, to minister to the aged and necessitous lying at our own doors. Every where they have exhibited the same spirit of simplicity and childlike dependence upon God which characterised the noble founder; and even those who would be slow to recognise the Church as the fountain from which these goodly streams of charity alone can flow, are loud in bearing testimony

to the beautiful fidelity with which the "Little Sisters of the Poor" fulfil the precepts of the Gospel.

The good Abbé, young and zealous as he was, was long harassed by an anxious but unavailing desire to afford permanent relief to the poor women of whom we have spoken. There was no hospital or asylum in the town, and they generally wandered about begging for their daily bread, and too often wasting all that they received by indulging in the most revolting drunkenness. They seldom went near a church, except to stand with outstretched hand at the door; and forgetting in their misery all the lessons of their youth, were yet more morally than physically degraded. One day a young girl named Marie-Augustine, who was not in the habit of confessing to M. Le Pailleur, came to him, as it were accidentally, for this purpose; and he immediately recognised in her a proper instrument for carrying out his charitable intentions. She had long wished to become a religious; and although only a poor needlewoman, dependent for her support on the labour of her hands, was extremely anxious to devote herself to the service of the poor. M. Le Pailleur encouraged her in this desire; and without communicating his project, which was, indeed, but vaguely shadowed out even in his own mind, he gave her such a rule of life as was fitted to prepare her for the excellent work in which she was afterwards to take so large a part. Another of his penitents, Marie-Thérèse, a young orphan girl in the same sphere of life, having manifested tokens of the same good dispositions, was desired by the Abbé to put herself in communication with Marie-Augustine; and these two girls, previously unknown to each other, became thenceforward associated by the closest ties. They were very young, one sixteen and the other eighteen years of age; but the younger was directed by M. Le Pailleur to look upon the elder as her mother and superior. He told them that they would one day consecrate themselves to God in the same community; and without explaining himself fur-

ther, he led them on step by step to conquer all their natural inclinations, and cultivate with care that interior and hidden life which could alone prepare them for their religious vocation.

Marie-Augustine and Marie-Thérèse yielded the most willing obedience to all that was enjoined them. They were separated by their employments during the week; but on Sundays, after Mass, they used to meet in private, and going down to the sea-shore, retired to a little rocky cave, where they remained during the afternoon, talking of spiritual things, comparing notes as to their progress during the week, and confessing to each other how often they had trespassed against the rule of life given them by *le bon père*. There were some things in this rule which puzzled them; but not the less scrupulously did they give themselves to follow it out. Amongst other injunctions was the following, which often seemed to them to involve some hidden meaning, which they could not solve: "We must love, above all things, to show ourselves gentle and charitable towards those poor old people who are sick or infirm. We must never refuse to do what we can in the way of taking care of them, especially whenever an opportunity of so doing presents itself; for we are to take great care not to mix ourselves up with what does not concern us."

This went on for nearly two years; during which time the good Abbé did not fail, by many a trial, to prove the fitness of his young penitents for the arduous work they were one day to enter upon. At length, fully satisfied of their stability and devotion, he opened his mind to them more perfectly, and proposed their undertaking the charge of a poor old blind woman who lived in the neighbourhood. This was the beginning of the labours of the little sisters. The young girls still lived, each in her former home, and worked as before; but all their leisure was spent in attending upon the old woman. Their little savings were devoted to procure comforts for her; they prepared her food and

bed, led her to Mass on Sundays, and did all that charity could suggest to soften her afflictions. A beginning once made in simple faith, God did not long withhold His encouragement to these good children to cause them to persevere. A woman named Jeanne Jugan, formerly a servant, who lived alone and earned her bread by spinning, became known to M. Le Pailleur, and was speedily recognised by him as a worthy co-operator in his plans. She was about forty-eight years of age, and possessed a sum of six hundred francs, her little savings. Her own account of the way in which she became acquainted with the Sisters is very interesting. "I was an old servant," she said to one who lately visited her. "I had always a great desire to become a religious; but that could not be: I felt as if God had given me the power of working for Him, but no occasion presented itself. How often I wept over this. When I used to see nuns, I could not help envying them. How many times have I prayed to God to let me work for Him! He heard my prayer. It was the Vicar of Saint Servan who first gave me the idea of taking care of old people. He spoke of it to two young workwomen, of whom one, Marie Thérèse, is now our Mother Superior, the other, Marie-Augustine, is Mother of our house at Saint Servan. The vicar came to me, and asked me to take part in this work. I could not understand what he wanted me to do. Then he sent Marie-Thérèse, who was only eighteen years old, and she explained it all to me so nicely; and then I was drowned in tears of joy, to think that the good God had received my prayers, and that the moment was come when He would make use of me. The vicar was desirous that his name should not appear in the matter, so that it might seem as if all we did was out of our own heads; but indeed this was not so."

The old blind woman was removed in the arms of Marie-Augustine and Marie-Thérèse to the garret in which Jeanne lived, on the Feast of St. Teresa, 1840; and Marie-Thérèse, the orphan, thenceforth took up her

abode with them. Marie-Augustine still remained with her family, but spent as much time as possible with the others. Another old woman was shortly afterwards taken in, but there was no room for any more. The three who had devoted themselves to the service of the poor, still went on as usual. They worked at their former occupations; a little harder, certainly, since they had now to provide for the helpless old people, but without anxiety respecting the future. The Abbé had told them to leave it all to God, who would open a way for them in His own good time; and, unconscious that they were to be the first members of a new institution, the Sisters gave their hearts untroubled to fulfil the work they had already in hand. The Abbé contributed the little he could spare to the infant community, to which a new Sister was now added. She was so ill that she thought herself about to die; and anxious to devote her last days to God amongst the Servants of the Poor, she caused herself to be carried to the garret where they lived. She had not, however, remained here long, when her health became perfectly restored; and full of gratitude to the Giver of all good, she made a vow to consecrate her days to His service, in the persons of the aged and infirm.

For ten months they remained in the garret; and then M. Le Pailleur, thinking it right to extend the charity to a large number of old people, advised them to hire a ground-floor which would hold twelve beds. The place had been a tavern, and was damp and cold; but after consecrating it by prayer, to wash away, as it were, any taint that might linger on its walls, from the profanity to which they had formerly been witness, the four Sisters installed themselves and their patients, and took in other old people, until the room was filled. They were now too much occupied to be able to gain their living by needlework. The care of the helpless creatures around them took up all their time. It is true that the public institution for the relief of the poor continued to give bread and lend linen to those amongst

them who had been accustomed to receive assistance, but others had no dependence except on casual charity. For some time, therefore, those amongst the patients who had hitherto lived by begging, still pursued their wretched calling. There seemed no help for it. But these daily excursions involved great and serious evils. Hitherto, restrained by no sense of shame or duty, too many of these women had indulged in drinking to excess; and when once out for the day they very often forgot the gentle warnings of the Sisters, and returned at night in a state of intoxication. This habit was so difficult to cure, that at last the Sisters determined at all risks to save the poor creatures from a temptation so perilous to their souls' welfare, and which the indulgence of years had rendered almost irresistible. But how then were the wants of the community to be supplied? And now began that heroic effort of the Sisters, by which they have ever since signalised themselves amongst all heroines of charity. The good Father, M. Le Pailleur, scrupled not to recommend his noble-hearted children to become beggars themselves for the glory of God and the good of their neighbours, rather than allow them to fall into sin. There was neither rebellion nor faint-heartedness at this humiliating proposal. It was cordially and even eagerly embraced; and Jeanne, filled with an admirable zeal, which urged her to be foremost when any sacrifice was called for, seized a basket and instantly set out to beg. From this moment the Sisters have begged for their poor,—begged, not by proxy or by letter, but with their own pleading tongue and outstretched hand from door to door. All the Sisters in turn have followed the noble example of Jeanne; but as she was the first, so did she also remain *the Beggar*, or *Questing Sister* of the house; and not only of that house, but, in turn, of all which have been established. She is, so to say, the Beggar of the whole Order of the Sisters of the Poor. She has opened the flintiest heart and tightest purse-strings: seeing the hand of God in all things, she is not disheartened by the most chilling

rebuff; those who denounce beggary most vehemently give alms cheerfully to Jeanne, and the French Academy accorded to her noble and touching self-devotion the prize of Virtue.

Jeanne went at first only to those places where their old people had been accustomed to receive alms; her appeal was liberally responded to. Indeed, the Sisters were much more successful in their quests than the poor women themselves had been. Some little dainty was often added to the dry crusts which were their accustomed portion; a few articles of furniture and clothing were occasionally bestowed, and the little community was greatly encouraged. The want of linen was their crying evil. The public institution for the relief of the poor had been used to lend a small but very insufficient supply; but when, from the pressure of other claims, this supply was reluctantly withdrawn, the Sisters were in real distress as to how they should meet the exigencies of their poor. In this necessity they had recourse as usual to prayer, and especially addressed themselves to the Blessed Virgin. A soldier who lived near the Asylum of Good Women, as the place began already to be called, undertook to build and decorate a little altar for them; and on the Feast of the Assumption the Sisters spread before this altar, which was adorned with a little image, a span high, of the Blessed Mother and her Divine Child, all the linen of the household. There were but five or six tattered garments; not a single sheet did they possess. The childlike faith of the simple Sisters drew down the blessing that attends the faithful. Numbers visited the little altar; and touched with the urgent wants of a household devoted to the solace of others, an abundant supply of sheets and other necessary linen was deposited, with many an earnest prayer, at the altar of Mary. Even poor servants, who had nothing else to give, took off their rings, or any other ornaments which they had, and hung them round the neck of the Infant Jesus.

The community was now well furnished with linen.

and a considerable degree of sympathy was excited in behalf of the devoted Sisters. All, however, did not smile upon them. There were not wanting many who looked with suspicion on the growth of this new body. Where were their rulers? Who had formed them to a religious life, and why did they not unite themselves with some one of the numerous religious orders already existing? For this, however, M. Le Pailleur was prepared; nor was he to be hurried into any precipitate measures by the meddling zeal of curious observers. He felt that the work was an entirely new one, and that it demanded new workers. Depending on the will of God, to which he was ready to resign all things, he was in no hurry to bind his children by vows or stringent rules; nor was he at all dismayed by finding that in the course of three years, eighteen months of which had been already devoted to the care of the poor, no Sisters had been added to the four with whom the work began. In spite, therefore, of the charity and sympathy which generally met the Sisters on their begging expeditions, there grew up a secret feeling of disturbance at their unauthorised functions, and a mixture of contempt embittered the liberality which responded to their appeals. They were pointed at, ridiculed and hooted in the streets of Saint Servan, and made to taste to the full all the humiliations of mendicity. Few of their former companions, those with whom they had played, or studied, or worked, would have any thing more to do with girls who walked about the streets begging. And the influence of this disgraceful pride spread over many who would otherwise have been won to the highest admiration of their touching self-sacrifice. Marie-Augustine suffered more from this than either of the other three, because she alone had relations to be scandalised by her conduct. Her youngest sister, now Superior of the House at Rennes, used to say with indignation when she met her in the streets, "Get away, don't speak to me; I am ashamed of you with your great basket." Nor was this feeling of repugnance simply one of pride.

The lowly and often bitterly repugnant offices which the Sisters, their only servants, had to perform for the helpless and diseased people under their care, have caused many hearts, really in earnest in their desire to serve God and to deny themselves, to shrink away in dismay. Sister Marie, now Superior of a House in Paris, felt the most lively anxiety to share the labours of the Little Sisters; but after paying them a visit, and witnessing all the abject humiliations by which their human feelings are constantly harrowed, she went away discouraged, saying to herself, in answer to the inward voice that called her to embrace this cross, "No, my God, no; it is impossible: Thou canst not require of me *this*." Another Sister, Félicité, Superior of the House at Angers, who died at last worn out by the most heroic exertions amongst the poor, had an intense desire to consecrate herself to God, and used to place herself in whatever church she visited, before the altar of St. Joseph, imploring him to obtain her the grace to become a religious; "but *not* amongst the Little Sisters," she would add.

The faith, however, of M. Le Pailleur and the four Sisters did not flag for an instant; and at the end of four years the dead calm which seemed to involve the little community began to break, and the current of charity to swell and flow onwards. First one and then another joined the Sisters. The first was a young woman, who came in some emergency to help in the house, and attracted by the spirit of love and good-will which reigned there, entreated to be allowed to remain. Next, two young needlewomen, being slack of work, had the charitable thought to offer their services for a few days, to mend the household linen. They even took a journey of five leagues for this purpose; and on going away, wept and embraced the Sisters, promising to return some day. But a short time elapsed ere they fulfilled this promise. Those few days devoted with loving hearts to God had won His favour, and He ac-

cepted them as His servants during the remainder of their lives.

Although the Sisters were yet so few, they had gone on adding by degrees to the number of their inmates; and in 1842, when their floor was quite full, they were courageous enough to buy a large house, formerly a convent. It cost 22,000 francs, and they had no funds; but their confidence in God was unhesitating. Their numbers were increasing, the applications from the poor to be received were unlimited. Yes, they *must* have room to take them in, and God would provide: and God *did* provide. M. Le Pailleur cheerfully gave his savings of five or six hundred francs, besides selling his gold watch, and the silver vessels of his altar; Jeanne Jugan gave her hoarded earnings whilst in service, 600 francs; the relatives of other Sisters contributed 1800 francs; God did the rest. Before the end of the year the house was paid for. The Sisters now took the modest title of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and were bound by the usual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, to which was also added the vow of hospitality. M. Le Pailleur himself drew up the rules by which they were to be guided, and read them to the assembled Sisters, saying, "My dear children, I wish to give you as much latitude as possible; I am anxious not to oppress you in any way." He encouraged and warned them, saying, "You will be called fools by every body; they will say of you, What non sense, to go and seek out all these poor people, without having the means of providing for them! But never fear, the good God will take care of you." This vow of hospitality, now an obligation upon the Sisters, was one which from the beginning had been most scrupulously observed. There was now better scope for it, and in eighteen months the large house was filled by fifty poor, and several Sisters. They were all supported by the quests of the Sisters, who went from one charitable person's door to another, gathering broken victuals,

crusts, and scraps of meat. By the good providence of God the supplies were always adequate to the wants of the inmates. The table was spread first for the poor; and after waiting upon them and satisfying their appetites fully, the Sisters themselves sat down, and were contented with whatever was left. This was, and is, the universal rule. One winter's night, after the old people had supped and gone to bed, the Sisters found remaining for their supper only one quarter of a pound of bread. They nevertheless took their places at table, and with a *Benedicite* that came from grateful hearts, tried to persuade each other to take the fragment, each declaring she was not hungry. In the midst of this cheerful strife, there was a ring at the bell. It was late at night, but the door was opened, when, behold, a bountiful supper of bread and meat from the Presbytery! And this was no solitary instance of the watchful love of an ever-tender Father.

Encouraged by such favour, the Little Sisters gave themselves more and more devotedly to the work. Their exertions for the spiritual welfare of their charges were also crowned with equal success. These poor creatures, sunk in the lowest degradation by carelessness, misery, and long habit, were roused from their trance of apathy by the beautiful spirit of charity which pervaded their new home. It was something so strange to find themselves cared for and tended with kindness, that they woke at once to a better life, and began to take an interest in the subjects on which the Sisters often spoke with a view to lead them to repentance. They learnt to love and bless God, who had sent to them in their misery such compassionate angels; and we are told that the most exquisite traits of virtue, courage, resignation, and piety might be related of those who, on their first entrance to the asylum, were, as it seemed, lost in misery and vice and degradation.

But again the house was filled to overflowing, and again the Sisters, who had themselves slept in the loft, found even that inadequate to their accommodation.

A bit of ground was placed at their disposal but a single sixpence was literally the whole wealth of the community. However, with their wonted faith, they determined to build; for there were yet many poor unhoused in St. Servan. The little piece of money was deposited beneath the statue of the Blessed Virgin, and the beautiful work began. Beautiful indeed it was. The Sisters themselves dug out the foundation, assisted by the labourers of the surrounding country, who came to help them for the love of God; masons and carpenters contributed their daily labour, farmers lent their wagons to carry the materials, and those who had money came forward with it,—all from the same holy motive. It was a revival of the ages of faith, a sight to kindle devotion in the coldest heart. Just at the same time, too, M. Le Pailleur received a legacy of 7600 francs, which he placed at the disposal of his beloved children. Another and very welcome addition to their funds at this time enabled the building to be completed. This was the sum of 3000 francs, awarded to Jeanne Jugan by the French Academy, as the prize of Virtue. It was in these words that M. Dupin concluded his report of her case: "But there remains a difficulty, which has doubtless suggested itself to the mind of each amongst you, how is it possible for Jeanne alone to provide the expenses of so many poor? What shall I reply to you? God is Almighty! Jeanne is indefatigable, Jeanne is eloquent, Jeanne has prayers, Jeanne has tears, Jeanne has strength to work, Jeanne has her basket, which she carries untiringly upon her arm, and which she always takes home *filled*. Sain'tly woman, the Academy deposits in this basket the utmost placed at its disposal, decreeing you a prize of 3000 francs."

There is a little fact concerning the legacy received by M. Le Pailleur which is well worth recording. A gentleman of Jersey had an old relative at Saint Servan who had fallen into the most disreputable habits of intoxication. Hearing that she was in want and misery

he came to the place, to see if any thing could be done for her, when, to his surprise and joy, he found her an inmate of the House of the Little Sisters, perfectly reclaimed and happy. Filled with gratitude and wonder, he thenceforth sent all his alms to M. Le Pailleur; and, dying shortly after, bequeathed to him the legacy of 7600 francs mentioned above.

This new house being finished, many fresh Sisters came to join the community, and an ardent desire arose in the minds of the first founders to extend the benefits of this institution beyond the limits of their native town. There were now, in fact, a greater number of Sisters than were absolutely required by the poor of the house. Rennes was the first place where a branch establishment was erected. But the beginning of things there was attended with exactly the same humility and entire dependence upon God that had characterised their first essay at Saint Servan. Without means, uncertain of the dispositions of the people amongst whom they were going, Marie-Augustine, who may now be called Superior-General of the Order, set forth with three or four Sisters to found this new offshoot. Taking up their temporary abode in one of the poorest localities, amongst dram-shops and common public-houses, their first quest was for poor old women, not for alms: they felt that God's poor would be the surest foundation for future blessings, and in securing them they seemed to have a pledge for all the rest. The Sisters met with the warmest sympathy, especially amongst the poor themselves, whose humble offerings were more highly prized than greater gifts from the rich. So readily did the town of Rennes seem disposed to correspond with the pious intention of the Sisters, that Marie-Augustine was encouraged to engage a house, to which the poor women they had already undertaken to provide for were gently carried by the soldiers who frequented the dram-shops of their first locality. Leaving four Sisters as the foundation of this new house, Marie-Augustine then returned to Saint Servan with two postulants from

Rennes, and found the Sisters had increased in number since her departure. This enabled them to send a little company to Dinan, where the same difficulties were braved in the same courageous way. Although welcomed by the priests of the town, and favoured by the special approbation of the bishop, the Sisters could obtain no better place to begin their work in than a prison, too old and damp and unhealthy to be any longer used as such. Furnishing themselves as before with a few destitute poor, to whom they gave up the best part of the house (this being the constant rule of the order, in accordance with their vow of hospitality), the Little Sisters cheerfully accepted for themselves the low and damp parts of the building; which had this unpleasant peculiarity, that, owing to its original construction, none of the doors could be fastened, as they all closed from without. None, however, during the many months they slept in this unprotected manner, would have entertained an idea of robbing these benefactors of the poor; nor was there much, in fact, to tempt the dishonest, their possessions being so meagre. A better house was at last provided, and they are now comfortably settled at Dinan.

In the year 1846, there were as yet but three houses and sixteen Sisters. In that year amongst the visitors to the baths at Saint Servan was a young girl of great but modest piety, who was so much interested by what she saw of the Little Sisters during her visit, that she felt the strongest desire to see this admirable order established in Tours, her native town. Although the distance was so great, nearly eighty leagues from Saint Servan, the Sisters determined to meet the earnest desires of one who, herself not rich, was yet so warmly interested in the cause of the necessitous. They found means to accomplish the journey; and asking only a temporary shelter, and a field of action, with liberty to work, they begun their labours in January 1847. Some generous Christians took them in for a few days; they then hired a little house that would hold ten or

twelve poor ; afterwards a large one ; and by February 1848 ventured to buy, at a cost of 80,000 francs, their present spacious abode, with garden and chapel, containing accommodation for nearly a hundred and fifty persons. Casual alms and daily begging have paid, and still pay, for all. But this foundation at Tours was full of suffering and difficulties for the generous Sisters. Owing to there being only three of them, and the great distance from Saint Servan preventing them from getting additional hands, they were sadly overworked. The number of infirm persons they almost immediately received was sixteen or eighteen, for whom they had to provide daily food, besides getting them up and dressing them, instructing them in their religious duties, and, what was a strict duty amongst the Little Sisters, keeping them gay and cheerful. This was too much for three young women to perform ; nevertheless, they exerted themselves to the utmost. The consequence was, that one of their number, Sister Félicité, died two years after, completely exhausted by her superhuman efforts ; and Sister (now Mother) Marie of the Faubourg St. Jacques, Paris, had her health irrecoverably shattered during their arduous first days at Tours. For a little while these three Sisters had only two palliasses between them, which they used to place close together on the floor to accommodate them more conveniently ; for whenever a poor person arrived, if there was not a spare bed, one of the Sisters was bound by her vow of hospitality to rise and give up hers, shifting for herself as she could. Accordingly, on the arrival of the seventh inmate, one of the Sisters had done so ; but now an eighth candidate presented herself. True, she had a bed, but no sheets. The Superior then said to her two daughters, " My children, we must cut our own sheet in half for this poor woman whom God has sent us, and manage as we can for ourselves." No sooner said, than the scissors were brought, the sheet held out at length by two of the Sisters, whilst the other prepared to cut it, when a knock at the door suspended the operation ; and,

strange to say, a young man stood there with a present of six pairs of sheets. The Sisters, when they had received this opportune gift, fell weeping on their knees to thank their Father in Heaven, who disdained not to supply even their meanest necessities. This incident is but one amongst thousands which might be related in every house of the Little Sisters, to show the watchful providence of God.

More than a dozen postulants now presented themselves from different parts of France, and there was a general desire to have some of the Sisters at Paris. The Brotherhood of St. Vincent of Paul warmly seconded it, and towards the spring of 1849 the Mother-General and Mother Mary arrived in the capital of France. The House of Nazareth, itself a humble refuge for aged poor, received them. Neither dazzled nor discouraged by the new scenes around them, the simple Breton women, armed with a map, made their way from street to street, looking for a large airy house that could be obtained at a cheap rate, but in a neighbourhood where they could reckon on some assistance. It was long before they found any thing to suit them, and new difficulties came in their way even when all seemed concluded. Meanwhile some good nuns, and other charitable persons, contributed to their support; but the poor Sisters had to struggle through many painful trials during the delays which attended their establishment at Paris. Their necessities were so great, that they were obliged to go and take their turn with the beggars who are fed at the soup-kitchens by the Sisters of Charity. There, amidst the motley crowds that were the mob of Paris in 1849, the patient Sisters of the Poor awaited their turn at the wicket,—thankful to receive for the worth of a halfpenny or two a supply of soup and vegetables that fed the whole community. Weeks, and even months, passed thus; but still the Sisters only regretted their separation from the poor and their dear community privileges. With admirable resignation, they waited for the will of God to be done. At length the Mother-

General was called away by imperative business, and left Mother Mary to abide the issue of the troublesome delays that attended their efforts to obtain a house. The cholera showing itself at this time, Mother Mary set herself to nurse cholera patients, that she might at least do something for God; but falling ill with the disease herself, was reduced to a permanently infirm state of health. At length, five months after their first arrival, the Sisters obtained their present residence in Rue St. Jacques, where Mother Mary is Superior; and which has been enlarged, till it now contains one hundred and fifty poor.

Whilst this was going on at Paris, another house was founded at Nantes, in accordance with the earnest request of the Brotherhood of St. Vincent of Paul. M. Le Pailleur himself went to Nantes; and as he never acted without ecclesiastical authority, and the See of Nantes was then vacant, he referred his wish to the chief clergy. Whilst they were considering the matter, M. Le Pailleur, the good father, as he is generally called, was obliged to return home. But he left Marie Thérèse, mother-assistant of the Superior-General, with one Sister, to await the issue of things. Before his departure he gave her twenty francs, and said, "God bless you, my child, open a house, and let me find you when I come back in three months' time surrounded by old people, and provided with a little room where I can lodge."

The blessing of the good father and the twenty francs prospered the work. During the twenty days which elapsed before Marie Thérèse received permission to begin it, she was in some danger of being left penniless, and had only four francs left when the answer arrived; but then it was favourable; and instantly hiring a convenient house, she began her work. At first the proprietor, seeing her arrive on foot, asked where her furniture was. Alas, the poor Mother had only a little straw, which she had just purchased as a bed for herself and the Sister who accompanied her! But before

the three months had expired, M. Le Pailleur returned, and found the house furnished with all things necessary, forty poor inmates, and the sympathy of the townspeople already warmly awakened. He himself had not been forgotten; there was a little apartment in the house appropriated to *le bon père*. He preached a retreat for the poor old people; and numbers amongst them, who had lived for long years in a state of alienation from God, returned to Him in penitence and tears.

It was a very general custom amongst the Sisters to go into the market-place and beg from the saleswomen. Soon after their establishment at Nantes, one of them accordingly went her way to the vegetable-market, and asked a small contribution for her poor old pensioners "for the love of God." How cheering to her timid heart must have been the cordial response that met her first appeal: "With all my heart; there is something so beautiful in what you are doing!" "Yes, sister, certainly," replied the next whom she addressed; "for when I am old I shall want to come to your house." It was the same with all. Three sacks were filled with the contributions of the market-women. The astonished Sister loaded them with thanks, and took a sack to put upon her shoulders; but this was not allowed. "You must not carry it," said the women; and clubbing together, they despatched a porter with the sacks to the asylum. When the Sister left them, they desired her to come again every Wednesday and Saturday, adding, "and pray for us!"

This same year (1849) a third house was founded at Besançon. There was neither delay nor difficulty about this foundation. Some good Christian had provided all things needful, and the Sisters on their arrival found a house well-furnished, and only waiting to be filled with poor. Mother Pauline, second assistant, was placed over this establishment. The archbishop had from the first signified his approbation of this new foundation; and emptying his purse of all it contained to the amount of less than a shilling into the hands of the Sisters, he

laid the money before the image of the Blessed Virgin. Then kneeling down with them, he offered up a prayer to the Comforter of the afflicted, and took his leave, bidding them call twice a week at his house to receive whatever fragments were left from his own temperate meals.

In 1850, houses were founded at Angers, at Bourdeaux, Nancy, and Rouen. It would only be tedious to enter minutely into the details of each foundation. The story was pretty much the same every where. Some difficulties, much faith, final success. At Angers an old chapel was given up to the Sisters for their house, and a paper screen was all that separated their dormitory from the old people. When an old woman died, there was no place to which her corpse could be removed from amongst her companions excepting the dormitory of the Sisters, who then laid out the body, and sat up all night watching beside it. Behind this paper screen died the good Sister Félicité, who was before mentioned as sacrificing herself so much at Tours. Like a faithful soldier on the battle-field, she died at her post, amongst the poor. Her memory is revered at Angers, and countless must be the prayers which have ascended to God in her behalf; for it had been a custom of the Little Sisters from their first foundation to offer up daily with their poor pensioners one Our Father and one Hail Mary for that Sister who should die first. At the time the account was written from which our sketch of the Institution has been chiefly taken, Sister Félicité was the only one who had entered into rest.

At Rouen was a Jesuit father, who was deeply impressed with the advantages that would result from an establishment of Sisters there. He wished them to come as much for the sake of their example as their good works; and whilst he was privately laying this matter before God, two of the Little Sisters unexpectedly arrived there on a begging expedition. On their applying to the archbishop's secretary and the Brotherhood of

St. Vincent of Paul for permission to seek alms in the town, they were told that it should be granted on condition of their not going away again, but remaining to found an asylum. Behold, then, the good Jesuit father's wish accomplished! The Superior-General was written to about a house which the Sisters thought would answer their purpose, and she forthwith came to see about it; but finding that it would only hold forty persons, and that there was another to let which would accommodate two hundred, she decided in favour of the larger house, considering the size of Rouen. In vain the expense was represented to her, and the uncertainty which must attend a new foundation, for which the popular sympathies had not yet been tried; the good mother knew full well, that to those who give good measure shall be returned. Experience justified her boundless faith. Within a fortnight no doubts of the propriety of the undertaking could be entertained; and the first time the Sisters presented themselves publicly for alms in the market-place, there was such a rush towards them of those who were anxious to offer gifts, that the police were alarmed, and would have taken some of the most vehement into custody had not the Sisters explained matters. All was then quietly arranged; the Sisters walked round the market, and each person in turn offered his little gift, with those cordial words which beautify generosity itself. So heartfelt was the desire to share in the good works of the Sisters by some little contribution, that a complaint was actually laid one day before the Superior against the questing or begging Sister, by some of the market-women, that she did not stop at their stalls so often as at some of the others; and it was necessary to be very particular not to wound the sensitive feelings of those generous benefactors by the repetition of this offence. At Bordeaux similar complaints were made, and the mayor was obliged to undertake to remonstrate with the Sisters. With such almost enthusiastic popular manifestations of sympathy, who can wonder that, although undoubtedly the Sisters

are indebted to many wealthy persons for occasional liberality, yet that it is on the noble poor they place, under God, their chief reliance?

The widow's mite has in a thousand touching and almost miraculous instances changed into a rich man's gift falling into their outstretched hands. The generosity of the market-women at Nantes has been every where renewed. At Bordeaux, the butchers have shown extraordinary liberality. It has been already told how, during the progress of the building at St. Servan, the workmen lent themselves unhired to the task; and it must be added that 500 men, employed by one of the ship-builders of this port, agreed amongst themselves to contribute each one halfpenny a week to the Little Sisters. The money, when collected, was carried every Sunday and deposited at the door of the asylum. Nor must the soldiers be forgotten, who spared many bowls-full of their soup and many fragments of bread to send to the poor old people.

We must now return for a few minutes to the house at Rouen. The town being so large and the number of poor so great, the Sisters could not themselves carry all the food they begged. Some charitable person presented them, therefore, with a donkey and a pair of panniers. An inscription round his neck told to whom he belonged; and when he was seen going on his way to the regular houses of call, those who would not venture to ask the Sisters to visit them every time they passed, gladly availed themselves of the opportunity of running out and putting some welcome gift into the well-filled panniers. Often too a window over-head would open, and garments, bundles of linen, or pairs of sheets, would drop at the feet of the Sisters from some hand that loved to do good secretly. The little donkey was sturdy, and could carry a good deal; but one day, in a narrow street, he was unfortunately overturmed by a passing carriage, and all the contents of his panniers tumbled into the mud. Worse than all, the panniers were broken. A good-natured workman, who saw the

accident from his window, hastened to help the Sisters to mend them with string. It was but a bad job after all; and returning to his workshop, he related the accident to his fellow-workmen. It touched their generous hearts; a subscription was instantly raised amongst them, and that very evening they carried to the Little Sisters of the Poor two beautiful new panniers. Must not the blessing of God be with such offerings as these! A manufacturer of Rouen wrote, soon after the establishment of the community in the town, to M. Le Pailleur, overwhelming him with gratitude: "What do I not owe you?" he said? "formerly my workmen were filled with Socialist doctrines; but since the arrival of the Little Sisters, they alone are talked of in the work-rooms, their goodness, their devotion, and their necessities." In truth, all sorts of unexpected blessings seemed to follow in their path. When their chapel was consecrated at Rouen, it was quite a public festival. The Archbishop presided, and many great and noble were there; but the number of work-people was still more remarkable. M. Le Pailleur paid his first visit to Rouen on this occasion. All eyes were bent on him with profound admiration. His children had won their hearts; they kissed his hands and clothes, and begged his blessing. Nor were their masters less delighted to see *le bon père*. One of these, to whom M. Le Pailleur was expressing his gratitude for his great liberality towards the asylum, seized his hands, and replied with tears, "No, it is for me to thank you. Before I knew your Sisters, I knew not God; they have taught me to know and love Him, I have seen Him in them: now I am happy, I am a Christian; and I owe it to you."

Universal, indeed, is the influence of their charity. A gentleman whose heart was far too deeply centred in his large possessions, was one day persuaded by his wife and daughter to visit the Little Sisters. They believed it would do him good, and with great difficulty they made him take a five-franc piece in his hand;

which, however, he secretly hesitated about parting with.

He went, his money in his hand. He saw with wonder the self-sacrifice of the Sisters,—their arduous tasks, yet their cheerful spirit; he saw the poor women, and was struck by their happy looks. On his way out, he read on a little box near the door, "Blessed of Jesus and Mary be the hand that drops herein a penny for the poor."

That moment his five-franc piece was dropped with out regret. It was probably the first money he had ever given away *willingly*. The next day he sent one hundred francs, and became thenceforward the benefactor of the house. "Ah, my mother," would he say to the Mother-Superior, "do you know that you and your poor people have opened to me the gates of heaven. Before I knew you I was a bad Christian, I did not love the poor; but now I love the poor, and the good God." He is now in truth a zealous Christian.

In 1851 as many houses were founded as in 1850. At the beginning of things the Sisters had tried to push their way to a new foundation; now it was difficult to respond to all the claims that were made upon them. It is worth while to record an incident which marked the transition of the house at Paris from its first difficulties to a state of prosperity which demanded the establishment of a second asylum. Every thing seemed discouraging at first; the Sisters found it hard to make their way, and at the end of many months prospects were but little improved. At that time *le bon père* came. Nothing disheartened him. "What shall we do?" asked the anxious Superior. M. Le Pailleur thought, and prayed, and asked counsel of God; and when he answered her he said, "I will tell you what must be done; throw open the house to every case that presents itself." And, in spite of their already insufficient means, this was done; they received thirty more pensioners in the course of a fortnight. From that time the house prospered, the revenues were abun-

dant, and they were soon obliged to enlarge their habitation.

It has been said that there now began to be an urgent demand for new asylums. Seven had already been founded in the space of eighteen months : but M. Le Pailleur was anxious not to hurry things. The Sisters who had been longest in the order required rest, and were also wanted to train the numerous postulants who were thronging in. He was determined to wait for eighteen months or two years more, that the younger Sisters might have time to be duly prepared for their future labours. However, there arose such an earnest demand for new houses, that he was compelled to give way ; which he did with the less reluctance, on finding that those whose hearts God had disposed to join the Little Sisters advanced so rapidly in all things necessary to their vocation, that they could be made use of after a very short novitiate.

This decided the good father to comply with an appeal which was made to him by the National Guards of the 10th Legion at Paris, to send some Sisters and open an asylum for the old people of their *arrondissement*. They offered a sum of 14,000 francs, begging that to each of their companies might be reserved the right of disposing of two beds, on payment of eighty or one hundred francs, according to the sex of the pensioners. This offer was accepted, and the Sisters came to settle in the Rue du Regard ; but they came in their usual simple style, although their future welfare was not in this case so precarious. Two of them arrived early to clean and sweep the house, and one of the officers of the National Guard was immediately at hand to help in arranging the furniture ; but there was none ! Almost before the place was swept, a poor old man arrived ; he was carried by the officer into one of the rooms, and made as comfortable as was possible. Meanwhile came M. Le Pailleur with the furniture for the new asylum, an image of the Blessed Virgin, and two pictures, one of St. Joseph and the other of St. Angus-

time,—these being the patron saints of the community. Putting the image upon one of the mantel-pieces, and pinning the two pictures to the wall, he knelt down with the Sisters and repeated an Our Father and a Hail Mary, adding words of the kindest encouragement; praying God to fill and enlarge the house, and recommending his children to have the tenderness of mothers for their helpless charges. Simple as this ceremony was, the bareness of the walls, the youthfulness of the Sisters, whose mission was yet so exalted, the joy of the poor man, who had found a home where all his earthly troubles were to be soothed, and the presence of God invoked so touchingly,—all these things invested this moment with so exquisite a grace, that those who were witnesses could not refrain from tears. Before night a bed was sent for the poor man, and palliasses for the Sisters. One hundred and fifty old people filled this house in the space of seven months. When the Archbishop consecrated the chapel, it was a festival for the National Guard: the most distinguished personages crowded during the ceremony amongst the poor old people in the little chapel; the spirit of humility which dwelt there overshadowed all. The Archbishop expressed his desire that every town in France and every parish in Paris might know by experience the devotedness of the Little Sisters, and it seems likely enough that his pious wish will one day receive its full accomplishment.

The house in London was the next and thirteenth founded; but of that we will speak more at length presently, as it will be especially interesting to hear what has been done in our own country. The fourteenth house was established at Laval, where a house and garden, placed at the disposal of the town for charitable purposes, was offered to the Sisters and gladly accepted. Had the hospital administrators turned this house into an hospital, it was considered that the necessary expenses would far outweigh the advantages to be derived from it: but they knew the Little Sisters could do

wonders without earthly means; and so indeed it proved, for the house is now full and prosperous. The next foundation was at Lyons, and it was attended with the same faith and poverty that marked the earliest institutions.

The Sisters reached Lyons unknown to every one, led thither by the encouragement of some good Christians at Paris, and strengthened by the benediction of the Cardinal Archbishop and the promises of Jesus Christ. Some charitable persons received them for a few days until their house was ready; but there is little doubt it will prosper as all the others have done. The sixteenth and seventeenth houses are for Marseilles and Lille. The eighteenth for the parish of La Madeleine in Paris.

We will now return to the thirteenth foundation, the house in London. For this we are indebted to his Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, who in 1851 requested that some of the Sisters might come and settle in London, the Brotherhood of St. Vincent of Paul promising their assistance. Although few of the Sisters could read, and none could speak English, they had no hesitation in responding at once to this appeal, cheerfully saying, "God will speak for us." They came strangers to a strange land; and devoted themselves to the English poor, by whom they found themselves surrounded, with all the tender charity and self-denying zeal which have always characterised their superhuman efforts amongst their own people. They settled first at Brook-Green, Hammersmith; but finding themselves too far from town, removed to 16 Great Windmill Street, Haymarket, where they remained two years. However, the difficulties they met with in getting a suitable house in town, compelled them to return to Hammersmith in September 1853, where they still are.

What a change for the lowly Sisters of St. Servan, to the suburbs of London! But in nothing are they changed from their original stamp. Who has not at

least once seen them threading their way amongst the crowds in Regent Street, presenting with their modest dress and downcast eyes a strange contrast to the fashionable idlers whom they pass? Perhaps not one in a hundred are professors of the same faith that has drawn them from their native land to bear their heavy baskets through our streets, begging charity for our poor. Certainly, although many have welcomed them in the truest Christian spirit, they have had to carry burdens of reproach less easily disposed of than the payments they have gathered by the way. But let us pass by these things in the spirit with which they have been borne by the Sisters themselves. Rude boys may hoot, and brutal men may whisper coarse insults as they pass, but there are those, even strangers to the Catholic faith, who almost redeem the injury by the homage that they render in their hearts to the true charity of the Little Sisters: and little children, those truest lovers of the beautiful and the good, will follow after the Sisters, and run to kiss their hands. Numbers, indeed, have fully appreciated all the greatness and heroism of their efforts; and it is not long since a very interesting sketch of the labours of the Sisters in their house in Windmill Street appeared in *Chambers' Journal*, under the title of the "Dingy House." The following short extracts will be read with pleasure by those who have not seen the article:

"We happened, by mere chance, when spending an evening with a friend in a distant part of the town, to hear of this house and its tenants; and the doings and character of its inmates struck our mind as something so extraordinary, and in some respects so beautiful, that we resolved, if possible, to pay it a visit.

"They have been in this house only for a few months; but are already fully engaged in the business to which they have devoted themselves,—the care and nurture of infirm and destitute old women. The extraordinary thing is, that the Sisters literally go about begging for the means of maintaining these poor people.

Every thing is done, indeed, by begging; for on entering the Sisterhood they renounce all earthly possessions. They have begged the means of furnishing their house and paying their rent, which is not an inconsiderable sum; they daily beg for the food, clothes, and cordials required for themselves and the objects of their charity. What is even more singular, these ladies in all respects serve the old women, wash for them, cook for them, act as their nurses. They treat themselves less kindly; for out of the broken victuals on which exclusively the house is supported, the old women always get the first selection, and the ladies only the remaining scraps. It is altogether the most striking example of self-denial and self-devotion which has ever happened to fall under our attention in this country. We were received in a faded old drawing-room, by a Sister whose age surprised us, for she did not appear to be above five-and-twenty. Her dress consisted of coarse black serge, and a linen cap, such as is worn by poor old women in the country. She was evidently a well-educated and refined English lady, who, under a different impulse, might have very probably been indulging at this moment in the gaieties of Almack's. With great courtesy, but without for a moment departing from the serious manner in which she had first addressed us, she conducted us through the house, and explained its various arrangements. We were first shown into a hall in the rear, where we found about thirty little beds, only a few of which were occupied, the greater number of the inmates being able to sit up and move about the house. Nothing could exceed the homeliness of the furniture, though every thing was remarkably clean. In another dormitory upstairs we found ten or twelve bedrid women, one of whom was within a few months of completing the hundredth year of her age, but able to converse. Another was a comparatively young woman, who had three months ago had a limb amputated. A Sister, in her plain dark dress, stood in this room, ready to attend any of the

poor women. We were next conducted to a large room, where a number of the inmates were at dinner. They rose modestly at our entrance, and we had some difficulty in inducing them to resume their seats. We were curious to see the viands, knowing that they were composed solely of the crumbs from the rich man's table, and having some idea, that as most of the Sisters were French, there might be some skill in putting these morsels into new and palatable forms. We did not, however, find that the dishes were superior to what might have been expected in a workhouse. The principal article was a pudding composed of pounded scraps and crusts of bread, and bearing much the appearance of the oatmeal porridge of Scotland. Ladies attend the old women at table, acting entirely as servants do in a gentleman's dining-room; though only in the limited extent in which such services are required at a meal so simple. It is only after this meal is concluded, that the ladies sit down to their own equally frugal fare. We were curious to know if they indulged in tea, considering this as a sort of crucial test of their self-denying principles. We were informed that the article is not bought for them, on account of its being so expensive. Their tea-leaves are obtained from the tables of certain families of rank, and are found to be of service for the comfort of the more infirm women. After the inmates are served, if any tea be left, it is taken by the ladies.*

We next descended to the kitchen, and there found a young woman at work as a cook; not a Sister, but one who may be so ere long, if she passes her novitiate successfully. The magazine of crusts and lumps of bread, of broken meat and cold soups, coffee and tea, which we saw here was a curious sight. We were also shown the pails and baskets in which the Sisters collect their viands. Two go forth every morning, and make a round of

* It may be worth mentioning, that coffee-grounds from coffee-shops form a very valuable article in the hands of the Sisters, who contrive to extract some flavour from them for the benefit and enjoyment of the poor old people.

several houses, amongst houses where they are permitted to apply. Meat goes into one compartment, bread into another. A pail of two divisions keeps a variety of things distinct from each other. Demurely pass the dark pair along the crowded thoroughfares of the metropolis, objects of momentary curiosity to many that pass them, but never pausing for a moment on their charitable missions." "We were curious to trace the feelings which actuated these ladies in devoting themselves to duties so apt to be repulsive to their class. Viewing the whole matter with a regard to its humane results, we did not doubt that benevolence was the impulse most concerned, directly or indirectly; although we of course knew that a religious sanction was essential to the scheme. In a conversation, however, with our conductress, we could not bring her to admit that mere humanity had any thing to do with it. The basis on which they proceed is simply that text in which Christ expresses His appreciation of those who give a cup of cold water in His name. It is professedly nothing more than an example of those charitable societies which arise in connection with the Catholic faith, and in obedience to its principles, and which require that entire renunciation of the world which to a Protestant mind appears so objectionable." After some remarks on this subject, the writer adds, "It is really hypercritical, however, even to intimate these dissenting remarks, especially when our main end is, after all, merely to bring the public into knowledge of an extraordinary phenomenon in human conduct, going on in an age which seems generally of so opposite a character. . . . It was only in 1851 that a detachment of the Sisterhood came to England, and settled themselves in Great Windmill Street, where, whatever may be their motives, it must be admitted they contribute in no slight degree to the alleviation of that vast mass of misery which seems an irreparable element of large cities." Whilst in Windmill Street, the Sisters had as many as ninety poor pensioners; but since their removal to Elm Tree House,

Elm Grove, Hammersmith, they are unable to accommodate more than from sixty to sixty-five poor. And to afford room for that number, five of the Sisters are obliged to sleep in an underground kitchen, and are literally in a passage. In fact, with the exception of one bed-room and the chapel, the whole house is devoted to the reception of the poor; and as there are sixteen religious, it may well be imagined the Sisters have many inconveniences to put up with in their present abode. Since they first came to England, they have on the whole received 150 poor; there have been seven deaths since the Sisters returned to Hammersmith, but the vacancies were immediately filled up; indeed, not a day occurs in which they are not under the painful necessity of refusing to take in some pleading applicant, whose only other resource is the street or the workhouse. It will be gratifying to know, that out of this large number of poor received, one case only has proved ungrateful and undeserving. Protestants are taken in as well as Catholics; but, of course, the applications from Protestants are not numerous. Nevertheless sixteen have been received, besides a Quakeress, a Baptist, and a Jewess, or one who called herself so. Not the slightest interference was made by the Sisters with their religious principles; but so winning was the charity by which these poor creatures found themselves surrounded, that all, with but one exception, have learned to trace it to its proper source, and have embraced the Catholic faith. The Sisters say, that whilst Protestants, these poor women gave them no cause of complaint, but since their admission to the Church they "have become models of virtue for the others."

Since their residence at Hammersmith, the Sisters perform their questings or begging journeys in a little cart, driven by themselves. This is necessary, as they have to travel from twenty to twenty-five miles every day. Some Protestants contribute, but very few,—not more than three or four. It is earnestly to be wished that more would do so; and doubtless there are many

who would be willing, if they did but know all the circumstances of the case, and that the charity is not confined exclusively to Catholics. The sole dependence of this house, both for clothes and food, is, as in the other establishments, on what the Sisters can beg. Several hotels contribute broken scraps, besides gentlemen's families. Although the rule followed in the house at Hammersmith is precisely the same as that in France, yet on account of different circumstances some modification in practice is essential. For instance, abroad, where the women are accustomed to work with their hands, most of the poor can be employed at their needle or in knitting, &c. The proceeds of this work go towards the support of the house, a part of each woman's earnings being, however, scrupulously given to herself. Here, however, the idle habits of the London poor make this impossible, and the Sisters are consequently more heavily taxed.

In France, too, a part of the house is partitioned off for the reception of infirm old men. This, however, has not been attempted here; but they would gladly take charge of bedridden and afflicted children, if only funds were placed at their disposal to enable them to do so.

The number of houses now established is thirty-three, and there are between five and six hundred Sisters. Most of these are from the class of servants and needlewomen; but there are many who, having been brought up to enjoy all the comforts and even elegancies of life, have willingly renounced all to make themselves the humblest servants of the poor,—to wash, and cook, and beg for those who have been beggars all their lives. The secret of all lies in this, that the Sisters see in their poor Jesus Christ Himself, to wait on Whom must be their highest glory. From this, then, springs the most delightful interchange of feeling between the Sisters and their pensioners; for these poor people reverence with the liveliest gratitude those who seem to them as the angels of God sent to redeem them from all their

misery and wretchedness; to comfort their bodies and enlighten their souls. The change wrought in the old people after they have been with the Sisters a little while is said to be most remarkable. From being factious, complaining, and idle, they grow cheerful and contented in the highest degree, and every one is anxious to do something to contribute to the common stock. "*Our houses, our sisters,*" they say,—a type of the perfect union which reigns amongst them. Every thing is done by the Sisters to cultivate a spirit of cheerfulness; they are treated as children, and every opportunity is embraced of making them a little festival. The beautiful simplicity of childhood seems to return in all its fulness to these poor creatures, whose lives have been spent in vice and misery. From a state approaching to brutality they revive to the happiest cheerfulness, even gaiety. Well may they often say, as they do, "We never were happy before we came here." On great occasions they sing and dance, and the Sisters join with them. Every *fête* of the Mother, or a Sister, or the anniversary of the foundation of the house, or any other event that can be made available, is taken advantage of to procure a little treat for the old people. These treats are simple enough, but gladden the hearts of those for whom they are prepared. Perhaps some kind benefactor will contribute an addition to their usual frugal fare; or, if not, they can find means to mark the day agreeably amongst themselves.

When the anniversary of the foundation of the house at Rouen was lately celebrated, the old woman who had been the first pensioner was crowned as the queen of the day, and her lowly seat was decked with flowers, whilst her aged companions cheered her with the heartiest good-will.

The tender regard with which the Sisters cherish the poor on whom they wait calls forth the best feelings of their hearts, so long dead to every human charity. They respond by the most refreshing cordiality; but *truly* hearts could not resist the winning kindness

with which they are invariably treated. One little incident will pleasingly illustrate how, above all selfish considerations, the law of kindness prevails :—One old woman was anxious to be received amongst the Little Sisters somewhere in France. Her case well deserved the privilege, but the old woman insisted on bringing also into the house her hen and her sparrow. Without these companions she would not enter, she would rather forego the advantage offered to her. Did the Sisters reject the unreasonable demand? No; the old woman, her hen, and her sparrow, were all admitted together—any thing rather than lose an opportunity of doing good. We are not told whether the old woman, won by the spirit of self-denial which she saw reigning paramount amongst her generous hosts, ere long resigned her hen to grace some festival dinner, but it is not unlikely. Selfishness could not exist long where such admirable examples are living in the Sisters. On every occasion they take the worst themselves. The crusts, which form the staple article of their food, are sorted on their reception, and the hardest are put aside for the Sisters, whose younger teeth can more readily dispose of them. Even in the longest established houses there are no chairs, except for the old people, each of whom has one, or a stool, or hassock; but the Sisters “sit upon their heels.” It is in this lowly way that they receive the priest’s instruction, or their mother’s advice in community. A Jesuit father on one day visiting one of the houses, found the Sisters just sitting down to dinner. They had nothing to drink out of but odd and broken vessels, broken mustard-pots, jam-pots, &c.; and all in such a dilapidated condition, that the good father hastened off the very first penitent who came to him to confession, with an injunction to buy a dozen of glasses and send to the house of his “*Petites Sœurs*.” These things will show the perfect poverty which exists amongst them.

Every time a house is opened, so soon as a sufficient number of poor are collected a retreat is preached. The fruits of these retreats in those who have been so long

absent from the Sacraments are wonderful. Thus the house is furnished with those who serve to set a good example to all who afterwards are admitted. Nothing can exceed the gratitude of these poor creatures when reconciled with God. They embrace the Sisters with tears. "It is seventy-five years since I drew near to God," said one, "and now I am going to receive Him to-morrow." A poor barber, who had lost the use of his hands through rheumatism, and being unable to exercise his profession, had fallen into such a state of destitution that he was thankful to accept an asylum in one of the houses of the Little Sisters, was observed after his confession to be looking very intently at his hands. "What are you doing?" was asked him. "I am looking at the finger of God," he replied. This spirit of resignation and gratitude may be said to be universal, and the joy of the Sisters in consequence may be conceived. They are not quite without their consolation even in this world. The religious festivals in these asylums are very touching. An account is given by one who lately was present at the procession of Corpus Christi in one of the houses in France. The Sisters, unable to spare time during the day, had sat up for several nights, to prepare all things as reverently as they could for this great occasion. The parish priest bore the Blessed Sacrament, and had brought some little boys to carry tapers and incense. But the procession consisted of all the poor old men and women in the house who could walk;—a lame and infirm company, but such as Jesus loved to have around Him whilst on earth. Coughing and hobbling, they went their way through the narrow paths of the humble garden, repeating in their feeble voices the responses of the hymns which the Sisters sang. At the extremity of the paths knelt those who were too lame or infirm to walk; their hands clasped their rosaries between their fingers; and in the same attitude were seen at the upper windows those whose infirmities confined them to their chamber.